

AFC QUARTERLY

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION

ISSUE 8



POHANG STEELERS

Focus turns to youth for three-time Asian champions

PLUS HONG KONG

Centenary celebrations herald dawn of a new era

ASHIKAN DEJAGAH

Iran midfielder sets sights on AFC Asian Cup after Qatar switch

ISSUE 8

October 2014



LEE SEUNG-WOO

Korea Republic's Barcelona-based teen sensation lights up the AFC U-16 Championship



PHIL YOUNGHUSBAND

Ex-Chelsea striker is looking to lift the Philippines to the next level



TAKESHI OKADA

Former two-time Japan coach looks to the future after a groundbreaking career

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Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President



Dear friends,

We are now in the second half of the year, and the pace has certainly picked up.

The FIFA World Cup most definitely entertained us with dazzling displays of football played by the very best in the world. The occasion made a lasting impression on me, and it was an honour, as the President of the AFC, to be in the presence of so many football lovers.

The quest for the FIFA World Cup trophy in Brazil may have ended abruptly for Asia, but we must pick ourselves up and, once again, hit the ground running.

We are fortunate in as much as the action on the pitch never stops and with the 2014 FIFA World Cup now over, we can now retrain our focus on Asia.

Youth football and its development are very close to our hearts at the AFC, and it is certainly encouraging to see that the spirit and passion for the game is evident even among our young ones.

In a very pleasing update, the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games again showcased Asia's football prowess at the youth level as both China, which grabbed the Games' gold medal in the women's category, and Korea Republic men's team which ended the Games with a silver medal, represented Asia proudly.

The AFC U-14 and U-16 Championships also exhibited quality football, and I believe the competitions as well as our youths' performances at the international stage have yet again convinced many of us that we have a bright future in the game.

The AFC Champions League and AFC Cup will also be crowning new champions in the coming weeks. Both competitions have been truly entertaining and full of surprises and this bodes well for AFC competitions that are set to further improve next year.

Another important occasion that is fast approaching is the AFC 60th Anniversary celebration that will be held in conjunction with our Annual Awards night. This year, the celebration will take place in Manila, our founding city, and I am confident that we can look forward to a splendid event.

Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President



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At the heart of the image



Dato' Alex Soosay
AFC General Secretary



Dear friends,

The world's biggest sporting event, the FIFA World Cup, proved to be a true exhibition of the beautiful game that we so admire.

Even though the Asian teams did not manage to meet certain expectations in Brazil, there were without doubt, several things of which Asia can still be proud of. There were instances where Asian teams could have capitalised on, but perhaps being a relatively young contingent, the lack of experience worked against them, and in the end experience matters at such a high level of competition.

You can read a review of the FIFA World Cup in this edition featuring an interview with Kwok Ka-ming, a member of FIFA's Technical Study Group for the 2014 tournament.

This issue also features one of Asia's FIFA World Cup heroes, Iran's Ashkan Dejagah. Having made his name in Europe with Wolfsburg and Fulham, the Iran international is now playing his trade in Qatar with Al Arabi. The experienced attacking midfielder gives his insights on Iran's preparation for the upcoming AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015.

For our club focus, we look at three-time Asian champions Pohang Steelers, who are continuing their quest to regain their footing as Asia's best club side, while we also look at Hong Kong as the Association there celebrates its 100th anniversary.

With months of exciting competitions from youth to futsal, the inaugural AFC U-14 Championship in Iran saw Iraq make history by becoming the first-ever Asian champion at that group level. The AFC U-16 Championship saw DPR Korea upstage Korea Republic to earn themselves a piece of silverware. The AFC Futsal Club Championship in Chengdu also created history with Nagoya Oceans being the first team to win the competition twice. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan's FC HTTU won the last ever AFC President's Cup.

It was a truly splendid several months of football, and we also have a round-up in this edition of our premier club competitions, the AFC Champions League and AFC Cup.

Normal service has certainly been resumed for Asian football, and we can expect many months more of exhilarating competitions, therefore, I look forward to your continued support for our beautiful game.

Dato' Alex Soosay
AFC General Secretary



Gallery



.....
Spot On
.....

Goalkeeper Ante Covic saved a penalty as Western Sydney Wanderers became only the second A-League side to reach the semi-finals of the AFC Champions League after edging out defending champions Guangzhou Evergrande on away goals in the quarter-finals.

Gallery



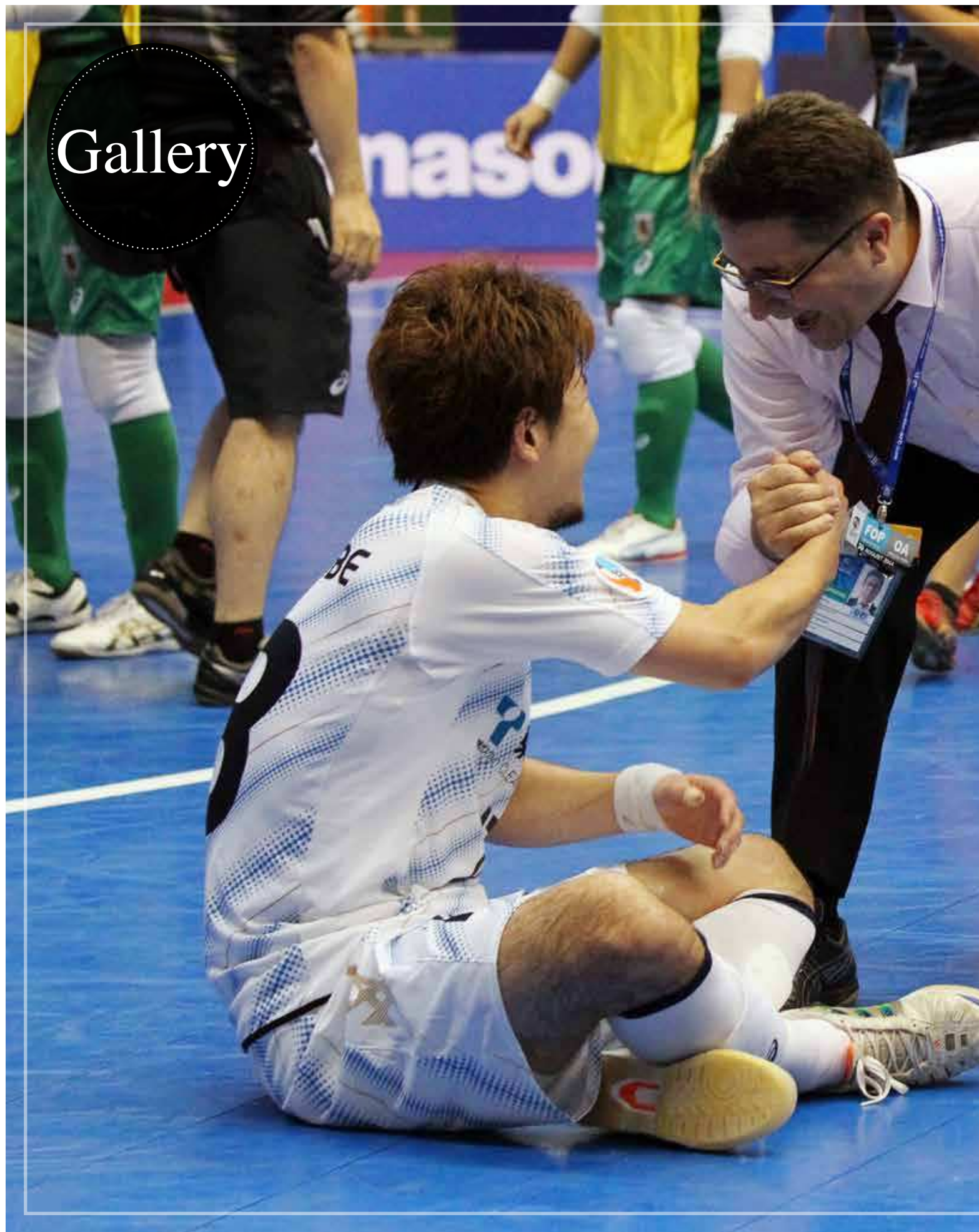


.....
**Kitchee
March On**
.....

Kitchee became the first Hong Kong side to qualify for the semi-finals of the AFC Cup in five years despite losing their quarter-final second leg 1-0 to Vietnam's XM Vissai Ninh Binh at Mong Kok Stadium.

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Gallery

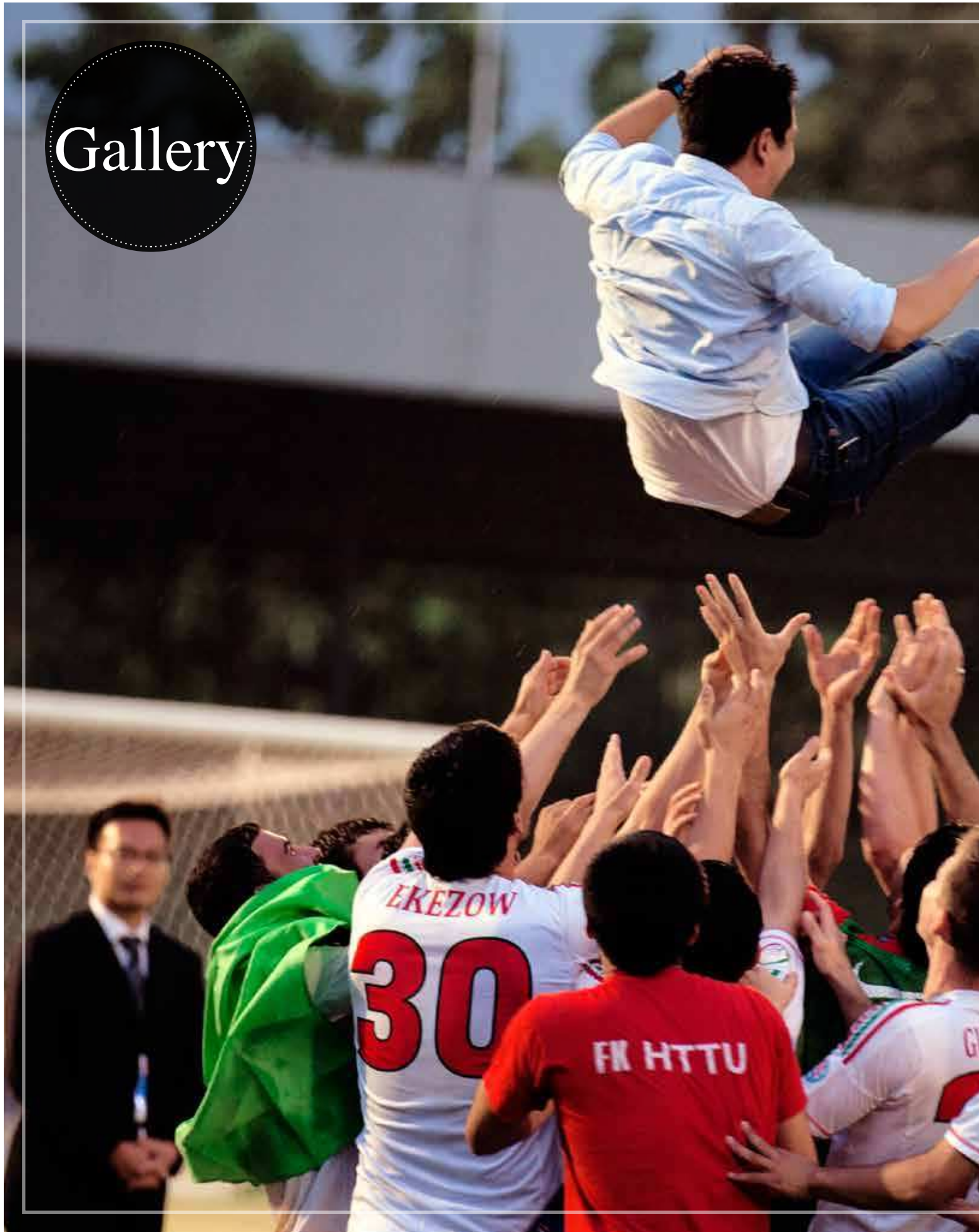




..... **Double Delight for Nagoya**

Nagoya Oceans became the first ever two-time winners of the AFC Futsal Club Championship after edging out defending champions Chonburi Bluewave 5-4 after extra-time in the final at Shuangliu Sports Centre at the end of August.

Gallery





..... **Flying High**

Turkmenistan's FC HTTU won the final edition of the AFC President's Cup after edging out DPR Korea's Rimyongsu Club 2-1 in September's final in Colombo thanks to goals either side of half-time from Akmyrat Jumanazarov and Suleyman Muhadov for Rowshen Meredov's charges.



FC HTTU Claim Last Ever AFC President's Cup Title

AKMYRAT JUMANAZAROV AND SULEYMAN MUHADOV SCORED AS TURKMENISTAN'S FC HTTU CLAIMED THE LAST AFC PRESIDENT'S CUP TITLE AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER AFTER EDGING OUT RIMYONGSU CLUB OF DPR KOREA IN THE FINAL.

Turkmenistan champions FC HTTU won the last-ever AFC President's Cup title in September after a 2-1 victory over DPR Korea's Rimyongsu Club in the final in Colombo completed a 100% record.

Goals either side of half-time from Akmyrat Jumanazarov and Suleyman Muhadov handed FC HTTU the lead, and despite Ri Kwang-hyok's late goal for Rimyongsu ensuring a tense finish, Rowshen Meredov's side secured victory at Sugathadasa Stadium.

And the win meant FC HTTU finished the tournament with a perfect record after topping Group A following a 3-1 win over Manang Marshyangdi Club of Nepal thanks to a hat-trick from Muhadov, who then scored twice to secure a 2-1 comeback victory over hosts Sri

Lanka Air Force SC.

"At the beginning of our season, I said this was our number one objective, the AFC President's Cup," said FC HTTU coach Meredov.

"The team showed their real performance today. We didn't play like this in the group stage; we didn't show our real ability. But today this was the real FC HTTU.

"We will never forget tonight and we will never forget this tournament."

Rimyongsu had advanced to the final with their own 100% record after emerging as Group B winners following comprehensive victories over Mongolian champions FC Erchim and Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra of Bangladesh.

"The players were very nervous ahead of the game today and as a result weren't able to play their best," said Rimyongsu coach Jo

Tong-sop following the final defeat.

"The match today was definitely a step up in terms of difficulty compared the group stage, but we had expected that to be the case.

"What we struggled with more was that we didn't have Jang Kwang-hyok as a result of injury and Ri Sang-chol due to suspension. They are big players for us.

"I have learnt a lot from this match; mainly that psychological and physical preparation is key and if that's not 100% right then this kind of result will happen."

Muhadov, meanwhile, claimed both the individual MVP award as well as the top goalscorer accolade after netting an impressive six goals in just three games in Colombo for FC HTTU, while captain Pak Song-chol collected the Fair Play award on behalf of Rimyongsu.



Comeback Win Seals U-16 Crown For DPR Korea

HAN KWANG-SONG AND CHOE SONG-HYOK SCORED AS DPR KOREA CLAIMED A SECOND AFC U-16 CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE AFTER COMPLETING A 2-1 COMEBACK VICTORY OVER KOREA REPUBLIC IN SEPTEMBER'S FINAL .

DPR Korea claimed a record-equalling second AFC U-16 Championship after recording a 2-1 comeback victory over Korea Republic in September's final.

Choi Jae-young's 34th minute header had given Korea Republic the lead as Choi Jin-cheul's side sought to claim a tournament-leading third AFC U-16 Championship title having advanced to the final with a 100% record.

But after Han Kwang-song equalised for 2010 champions DPR Korea five minutes after half-time, Choe Song-hyok struck with 23 minutes remaining as Yon Kwang-mu's side joined Korea Republic, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia and Oman as two-time winners.

"We have been preparing for this

championship for a long time with the qualifiers last year, but we have now succeeded," said former DPR Korea international striker Yon after his first final appearance as a head coach.

"We have united as one as we have tried to show our team spirit in all our matches."

DPR Korea and runners-up Korea Republic as well as fellow semi-finalists Australia and Syria had already secured qualification to represent Asia at the 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup in Chile.

"The players did well, but we realise we need to do more to win, but we have another chance next year in the World Cup," said Korea Republic coach Choi Jin-cheul.

"We need to prepare for next year's World Cup and we need to increase our speed of play and possession, and also

fix some defensive issues. If we improve step-by-step, we can do better at the World Cup."

Korea Republic's Spain-based striker Lee Seung-woo, meanwhile, claimed both individual accolades after being named tournament MVP and top scorer.

Barcelona striker Lee netted five goals in six games to lead the scoring charts ahead of Han and Choe as well as Australia's Cameron Joice.

"I was able to play well because of my team-mates and coaches and I would like to thank all of them," said Lee, who joined Barcelona in 2011 after impressing at the Danone Cup in South Africa while playing for Daedong Elementary School.

Korea Republic, meanwhile, also claimed the Fair Play award after picking up just six yellow cards in their six games.



Nagoya Oceans Land Second Futsal Club Crown

WATARU KITAHARA SCORED THE WINNER IN THE LAST MINUTE OF EXTRA-TIME AS JAPAN'S NAGOYA OCEANS CLAIMED A SECOND AFC FUTSAL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE AFTER DEFEATING THAILAND'S CHONBURI BLUEWAVE IN AUGUST'S FINAL.

Japan's Nagoya Oceans became the first-ever two-time AFC Futsal Club Championship winners in August after edging out defending champions Chonburi Bluewave of Thailand 5-4 in extra-time in the final in Chengdu.

Having fallen short at the semi-final stage in both 2012 and 2013 since their historic 2011 title-winning campaign, Wataru Kitahara was on target with a minute of extra-time remaining to end Nagoya's wait for a second title having been a participant in the inaugural tournament in 2010.

Nagoya finished the tournament with an unbeaten record after topping a group that included home side Shenzhen Nanling Tielang, Lokomotiv Tashkent of Uzbekistan and Australia's Vic Vipers before eliminating

Iranian club Dabiri Tabriz in their semi-final encounter.

"It was an extremely tough match against a very difficult team in Chonburi, especially when there were so little differences between the two sides," said Nagoya coach Victor Acosta.

"But we played a pressing game with a high defensive line that forced Chonburi to play quite deep. It was a risky strategy, but it worked for us and in a game that is so tight like this, you need sometimes to take a chance."

Chonburi's route to the final included winning Group B ahead of Lebanon's Bank of Beirut SC, Tabriz of Iran and Kuwaiti club Al Qadsia, as well as a 6-3 semi-final victory over Shenzhen.

"Every time we brought the scores back level we would make another mistake and

Nagoya punished us because they're a great team," said Chonburi coach Jose Maria Pazos.

"Although, while we're sad now, we will in time realise our achievements and how we fought and beat teams with more history and resources than us and reached a second consecutive final."

Earlier, Tabriz had bounced back from their 6-2 loss to Nagoya in the semi-finals to claim third place by edging out Shenzhen in a penalty shootout following their 5-5 draw.

Nagoya's Japan international Kaoru Morioka, meanwhile, was named MVP of the tournament while he also claimed the top scorer honour for the second consecutive year after netting five goals in eight-team the tournament in China at the end of August.



MVP Miyama Donates Prize Money To UNICEF

TWO-TIME AFC WOMEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR AYA MIYAMA DONATED HER US\$10,000 PRIZE MONEY FOR WINNING THE MVP AWARD AT THE 2014 AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP TO CHILDREN'S CHARITY UNICEF.

Midfielder Aya Miyama donated her US\$10,000 prize money for being named MVP as Japan won the 2014 AFC Women's Asian Cup to children's charity UNICEF.

Miyama played in four of Japan's five games in Vietnam in May as the Nadeshiko won the AFC Women's Asian Cup for the first time.

And after being named MVP following Japan's 1-0 win over Australia in the final having been at the heart of her team's creative play throughout the continental competition with her eye-catching passes and calmness on the ball from the centre of midfield proving to be a consistent and reliable anchor for the Nadeshiko attack, the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup winner decided to donate the prize

money to UNICEF.

"Although I was awarded the prestigious MVP at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Vietnam 2014, I consider this to be awarded not to me as an individual, but to the whole team," said Miyama, who started the cleverly-worked corner routine with Rumi Utsugi that resulted in Azusa Iwashimizu successfully converting the only goal in the final.

"We, Nadeshiko Japan, won the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2011 when the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami impacted Japan, and the people in the affected area gave us tremendous strength.

"As a national team traveling to many countries and territories, we are always helped by the local people.

"We are grateful if this donation will be beneficial to areas where support is needed, and we will continue to do our very best to

contribute through sports."

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, are active in more than 190 countries and territories through country programmes and national committees.

The charity was created to nurture and care for children by working with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination present.

"On behalf of UNICEF, I want to express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Miyama," said Hiromasa Nakai, Chief Information & Public Affairs, Japan Committee for UNICEF.

"The trust and generosity given by Ms. Miyama, the captain of Japan's national team and a world-class football player, will make a tremendous impact on UNICEF's work and the well-being of millions of children."

FOUR BOW OUT IN BRAZIL

ASIA'S FOUR REPRESENTATIVES AT THE FIFA WORLD CUP – AUSTRALIA, IRAN, JAPAN AND KOREA REPUBLIC – WERE LEFT FLATFOOTED AMID THE SAMBA BEAT IN BRAZIL IN JUNE. REDEMPTION AT THE AFC ASIAN CUP IN JANUARY IS NOW THE GOAL FOR ASIA'S TOP TEAMS.

By: Michael Church Photos: Getty Images







The late June sun was setting behind the stands of Sao Paulo's Corinthians Arena, and as it edged closer to the horizon, Asia's hopes of at least one team progressing to the knockout phase of the 2014 FIFA World Cup finals were disappearing fast.

Belgium, despite being a man down and having already booked their place in the Round of 16, were holding a single goal advantage against Korea Republic, with Hong Myung-bo's side needing a win to have even the remotest hope of securing a second successive spot in the knockout phase.

The final seconds ticked away in what remained of the last group match involving one of the continent's four representatives, with Japan, Iran and Australia having all exited the tournament already, and Hong's side would soon make it four out of four Asian teams returning home at the earliest moment possible.

Four years on from the continent's finest display on foreign soil, when the Koreans and Japanese advanced from the group stages in South Africa, the tale was very different: from 12 games played, Asia's quartet of qualifiers could only claim a trio of points from three draws over almost three weeks of football.

There can be little disputing the facts: since

1998, when Asia was represented at the FIFA World Cup by four nations for the first time, the showing in Brazil was the continent's weakest with the 2014 edition of the FIFA World Cup the first since 1990 that no Asian team had secured a win.

And yet, despite the gloomy prognosis, there was just enough encouragement to be gained from the continent's trek to South America; as German fans danced in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, Berlin and all points between and beyond, Asia's post-mortem was well under way.

While the Japanese and Koreans struggled to match expectations, Iran and Australia both went to Brazil with little to lose and both came out with reputations enhanced and with their eyes firmly fixed on success at the finals of the AFC Asian Cup in Australia in January.

Iran went agonisingly close to picking up at least a point against eventual finalists Argentina, only for Barcelona star Lionel Messi to score with just seconds remaining after Carlos Queiroz's side had already picked up a point against Nigeria.

Australia, too, caught the eye with their determined displays that featured one of the goals of the tournament as Tim Cahill struck with a spectacular volley in the Socceroos' spirited 3-2 loss against the Netherlands.

Several flashes of inspiration coupled with typical Australian spirit and grit made Ange

Postecoglou's side a tricky opponent for Chile and the Netherlands in their opening games, before eventually succumbing in a pair of thrilling encounters.

"I was very impressed by the Australians," says former Japan coach Philippe Troussier of the young, inexperienced Socceroos squad.

"They had a new coach and new players, except for Cahill, and they played well.

"OK, they lost all three games but it's not easy at the World Cup and for them it will be good preparation for the Asian Cup at the start of next year at home. It was a good challenge for them and they will have learned a lot."

Despite Postecoglou's claims – "we're not here to gain experience, we're here to win," was a refrain often heard from the former Brisbane Roar coach – the squad the Australia coach took to Brazil appeared to have at least one eye on the hosting of the continental championship.

With the likes of Mathew Leckie and Matthew Spiranovic impressing during their time in Brazil, the Socceroos – buoyed by the boisterous Green and Gold Army – will welcome the rest of the continent to their home shores in January in confident mood.

The Iranians, too, will turn out at the AFC Asian Cup in upbeat fashion after taking their bid for a place in the last 16 to



the final game, only to lose against Bosnia-Herzegovina in Salvador.

Despite protracted contract negotiations, the Iranian federation has retained Queiroz as coach, a move that will have delighted many in the squad that battled so hard in Brazil for Team Melli.

"It has been an honour for me, and I'm speaking for all of my team-mates, it has been an honour for us to work with such a great coach but besides that, a great person," said Reza Ghoochenehjad after scoring Iran's only goal of the tournament, against the Bosnians in their final game.

"He is unbelievable and we have so much respect for him. Not only us, but all of the Iranian people. The things he has shown us, the things he has taught us have been unbelievable.

"He has taken Iranian football forward maybe 20 years. We should all be thankful to him because it's because of him that we are at the World Cup and we showed some good games, especially against Argentina. I'm really proud that he is our coach."

While the Australians and Iranians came out of the FIFA World Cup with positives to ponder, for the Koreans and Japanese, it was a time for soul searching just four years after impressing in South Africa.

Both will go to Australia with new coaches after Alberto Zaccheroni stepped down from

Far Left Japan drew with Greece before losing to Colombia

Left Korea Republic lost 4-2 to Algeria

Above Iran were unfortunate to lose 1-0 to Argentina

the helm of the Samurai Blue, while Hong followed suit soon after his return to Seoul, despite being contracted through to the end of the AFC Asian Cup finals.

Big things were expected from the Japanese, especially after a strong showing at the FIFA Confederations Cup 12 months before looked to have prepared them for the test that lay ahead.

But a 2-1 loss against Cote D'Ivoire in their opening game followed by failure to defeat 10-man Greece in the second round of group matches left Zaccheroni's team with an uphill struggle that came to crushing end to the tune of a 4-1 loss against Colombia.

"The Japanese were confident of their place in the group, and all four teams had a fair chance, so they would have been confident to progress if not in first place, then in second," says FIFA Technical Study Group member Kwok Ka-ming of Japan's performance in Brazil.

"In all three games they performed, they kept possession and created opportunities but they didn't take their chances. I was a little surprised at the condition of the players, especially in the second half. Their condition wasn't good.

"Against Greece they were up against 10 men for most of the game and they couldn't score, and that was a pity. And that's why they failed to qualify for the second round. The conditioning of the players, even against Colombia, who had already qualified, wasn't good and they conceded four goals. Normally they play as a team, and defend as a team, but the back four was isolated and that was a surprise."

Zaccheroni's place at the helm of the Japan team has now been taken by Javier Aguirre – who the Japan Football Association had attempted to lure to Tokyo four years previously before hiring Zaccheroni – while Hong has been replaced by German coach Uli Stielike as the Koreans attempt to rebuild ahead of Australia 2015.

"At the World Cup, you need experienced coaches and you don't go there to learn," says Kwok of the Koreans, who drew 1-1 with Russia in their opening game before their campaign all but crumbled thanks to a 4-2 loss against Algeria.

"The World Cup is the World Cup and you have to perform. But Hong Myung-bo took them to the Olympic Games.

"The team was OK in terms of fitness, but they didn't have the pattern of scoring goals like they did in South Africa. They only scored two goals in the tournament, their offensive players are playing in Europe and



they play at the top level but the team isn't at that level.

"The game that killed them was the one against Algeria. They were surprised, and maybe they had some false information. The Algerians didn't do well against Belgium in their opening game, and they never showed off their ability in attack. So, perhaps the coach underestimated the Algerians. They conceded three goals in 10 minutes and that killed them."

However, despite the disappointing results, Kwok is convinced Asian football continues to move in the right direction in the quest to compete with the best in the global game.

"We are on the right track, because the players at the top in Japan, Korea and other countries now are playing in top clubs in Europe and are at a high level," he says.

"Everybody is playing the same way. There is no secret in terms of preparation or what needs to be done at youth level. Everyone now is playing the same way, but you have to have outstanding individuals.

"Players have to go to the top four or five leagues, and if they can't go there then they have to go the second tier and work their way up.

"It's like working in finance: if you want to go to the top, you go to New York or London or somewhere like that, and it's the same in football. This is globalisation. It's not much

different. If you are playing with those players and at those clubs, of course you will improve.

"The other teams all have an outstanding individual, whether it is Lionel Messi or

James Rodriguez or Arjen Robben or whoever; one of the only players we have like that at the minute is Son Heung-min, he can do that. We need more players like that, but we can do it."

*Above
Australia
were edged
out 3-2 by the
Netherlands
either side
of defeats by
Chile and
Spain*

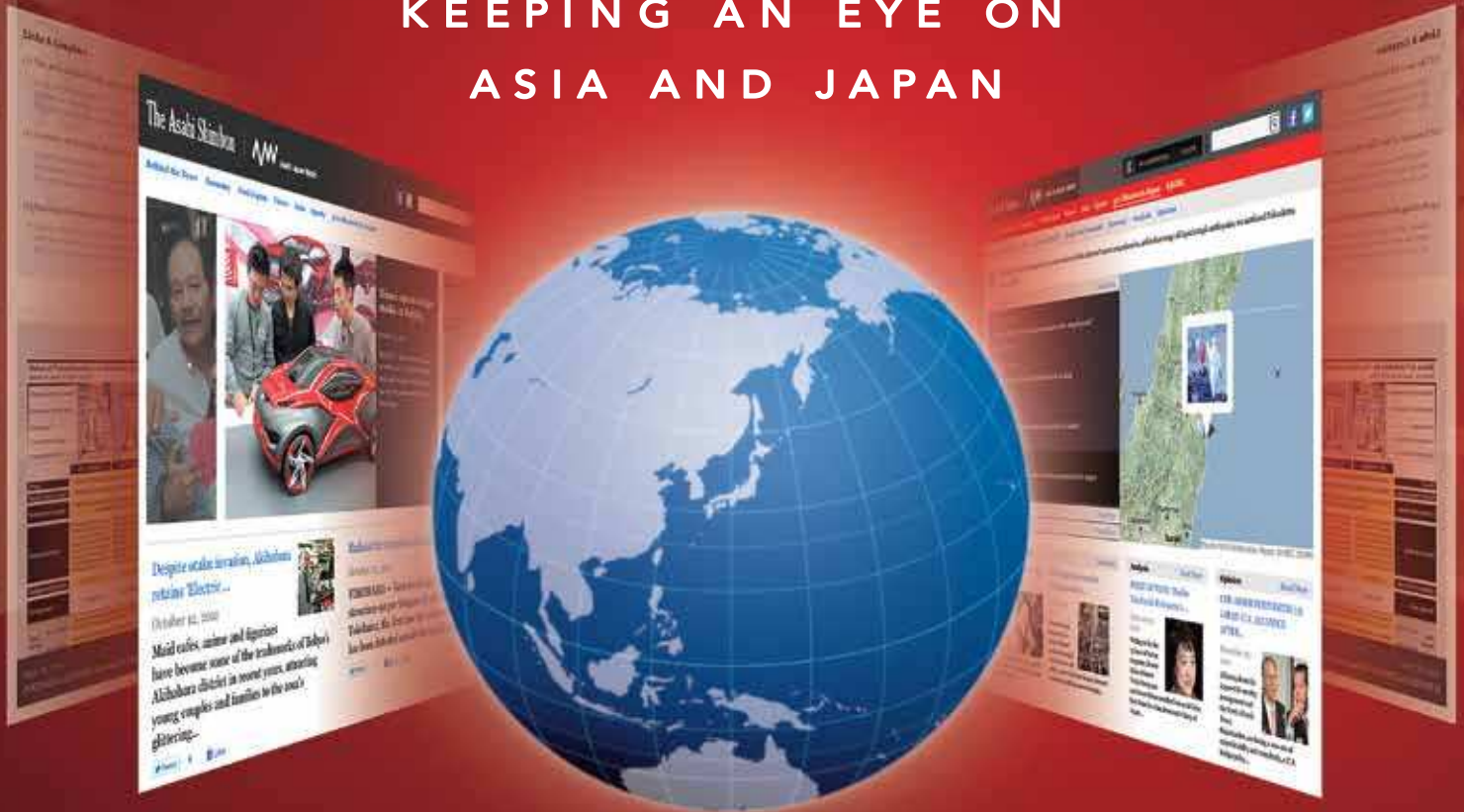
ASIA AT THE 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP BRAZIL

Group B								Group F							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/- Pts		P	W	D	L	F	A	+/- Pts
Netherlands	3	3	0	0	10	3	7 9	Argentina	3	3	0	0	6	3	3 9
Chile	3	2	0	1	5	3	2 6	Nigeria	3	1	1	1	3	3	0 4
Spain	3	1	0	2	4	7	-3 3	Bosnia-Herzegovina	3	1	0	2	4	4	0 3
Australia	3	0	0	3	3	9	-6 0	Iran	3	0	0	1	1	4	-3 1
Australia 1 (Tim Cahill 35) Chile 3 (Alexis Sanchez 12, Jorge Valdivia 14, Jean Beausejour 90+2)								Iran 0 Nigeria 0							
Netherlands 3 (Arjen Robben 20, Robin van Persie 58, Memphis Depay 68) Australia 2 (Tim Cahill 21, Mile Jedinak 54 pen)								Argentina 1 (Lionel Messi 90+2) Iran 0							
Spain 3 (David Villa 36, Fernando Torres 69, Juan Mata 82) Australia 0								Iran 1 (Reza Ghoochamnejhad 82) Bosnia-Herzegovina 3 (Edin Dzeko 23, Miralem Pjanic 59, Avdija Vrsajevic 83)							
Group C								Group H							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/- Pts		P	W	D	L	F	A	+/- Pts
Colombia	3	3	0	0	9	2	7 9	Belgium	3	3	0	0	4	1	3 9
Greece	3	1	1	1	2	4	-2 4	Algeria	3	1	1	1	6	5	1 4
Cote D'Ivoire	3	1	0	2	4	5	-1 3	Russia	3	0	2	1	2	3	-1 2
Japan	3	0	1	2	2	6	-4 1	Korea Republic	3	0	1	2	3	6	-3 1
Japan 1 (Keisuke Honda 16) Ivory Coast 2 (Wilfried Bony 64, Gervinho 66)								Korea Republic 1 (Lee Keun-ho 68) Russia 1 (Aleksandr Kerzhakov 74)							
Greece 0 Japan 0.								Algeria 4 (Islam Slimani 26, Rafik Halliche 28, Abdelmoumene Djabou 38, Yacine Brahimi 62) Korea Republic 2 (Son Heung-min 50, Koo Ja-cheol 72)							
Japan 1 (Shinji Okazaki 45+1) Colombia 4 (Juan Cuadrado 17, Jackson Martinez 55, 82, James Rodriguez 90)								Korea Republic 0 Belgium 1 (Jan Vertonghen 78)							



The Asahi Shimbun AJW

KEEPING AN EYE ON ASIA AND JAPAN



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MAGISTA



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A STAR IN THE MAKING

KOREA REPUBLIC STRIKER LEE SEUNG-WOO WAS NAMED TOURNAMENT MVP AND TOP SCORER AT THE AFC U-16 CHAMPIONSHIP AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER TO ANNOUNCE HIMSELF ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.

By: Andrew Mullen • Photo: World Sport Group

While Son Heung-min is still very much at the start of his career, a compatriot looking to emulate the Korea Republic and Bayer

Leverkusen midfielder is already planning his rise to the next level having starred at September's AFC U-16 Championship.

Dubbed the "Asian Lionel Messi" having posted a better goal scoring record than the Argentinian for Barcelona's U-15 team, and while admitting his admiration for the four-time Ballon d'Or winner, Lee Seung-woo is looking much closer to his homeland – or in actual fact Germany – as the highly-rated 16-year-old striker plots his future.

And their careers have so far made similar starts with a 16-year-old Son joining Germany's Hamburg, while Lee moved to Spain to join Barcelona in 2011 aged just 13.

"For Barcelona, of course I look at Lionel Messi, but for Korea I like Son Heung-min," says Lee.

"I heard about the comparison between Messi and myself, but I don't care about that, I will just try to keep my playing style.

"Son also played for the Korea U-16 team, and when he was young he moved overseas and was successful.

"And when he joined the national team he was very enthusiastic and I would like to be like this."

Lee had caught the eye of Barcelona's scouts after top scoring with 12 goals at the Danone Cup in South Africa in 2010.

"I started playing football aged eight while I was in the first grade of elementary school. I joined Kim Hee-tae FC which is named after a famous coach. I stayed here until I was in the fourth grade, around 11 years old, and then I moved to Daedong Elementary School in Seoul," adds Lee.

"I did not get many chances to play at Kim Hee-tae FC as football was just a hobby and for fun, but when I moved to Daedong Elementary School, I started to play more tournaments. I moved to Daedong Elementary School because it is one of the most famous and best teams at elementary school level."

Lee eventually joined Barcelona and their famed La Masia academy in 2011 along with compatriot and AFC U-16 Championship team-mate Jang Gyeol-hee and scored 38 goals along with 18 assists in just 29 games in his first season with the U-15 side.

"It was an easy decision to move to Spain, I was very happy. I was very surprised when I first heard Barcelona wanted me, I didn't expect it. But after that I soon got used to it as I played for the team," says Lee.

"My family were also very happy and they eventually moved to Spain at this start of 2014, but before that I was on my own at La Masia.

"At first it was very tough with the language barrier with players from other countries, but now I can speak fluent Spanish so now there is no problem at all."

On the international front, Lee played for Korea at the AFC U-13 Football Festival in 2011 before scoring all four goals in his side's win over Laos during the qualifiers for the this year's AFC U-16 Championship, which represented his only start of the campaign.

Lee did miss Korea's opening win of the AFC U-16 Championship finals against Oman due to suspension, but with much expected of him, the striker delivered and scored the only goal of the game in the first half against Malaysia after evading five defenders before netting from just inside the penalty area.

He added another in Korea's win over Thailand at the end of the group stage

after exchanging passes with Barcelona team-mate Jang on the edge of the penalty before scoring both goals in the win over Japan in the quarter-finals.

The first was a simple tap-in from the edge of the six-yard area after starting the move on the edge of the penalty area, but the second was all of his own making as Lee picked the ball up 10 yards inside his own half, bypassed three defender and the goalkeeper before rolling the ball into the empty net.

"Lee Seung-woo is very quick and dribbles well, while he is also good at controlling the ball. He also has a good scoring ability and understands how defenders move and can dribble well around them," said Korea U-16 coach Choi Jin-cheul, who played for the Taeguk Warriors at the FIFA World Cup in 2002 and 2006.

"When he plays and trains all the other players look at him and follow him so he enhances our playing style as he is good for the other players. Other players do try and copy him, but he is at another level."

He did only manage a penalty in the 7-1 win over Syria in the semi-finals, but after being man-marked for the majority of the contest, Lee was still able to contribute four assists.

But in the final, Lee was unable to add his to goal tally as his side lost 2-1 to DPR Korea, although the striker was still named tournament MVP and top scorer having netted five goals in five games.

"I feel my skills have improved as I am playing with a better quality of young players. I would next like to join the second team in Barcelona and my dream is to eventually join the first team," says Lee, who was named man of the match in four of his five games at the AFC U-16 Championship.

"I have always dreamed about being a player for the Korea national team. I am not targeting the 2018 or 2022 World Cups, it all depends on how I play and my ability."



IRAN AT HEART

IRAN FIFA WORLD CUP STAR ASHKAN DEJAGAH HAS JOINED THE GROWING LIST OF ASIAN PLAYERS SIGNING FOR CLUBS IN THE QATAR STARS LEAGUE, BUT WHILE THE FORMER FULHAM AND WOLFSBURG MAN SETTLES INTO A NEW LIFE AT AL ARABI, HE IS SETTING HIS SIGHTS ON DELIVERING THE AFC ASIAN CUP FOR IRAN IN JANUARY.

By: Michael Church Photos: World Sport Group/Getty Images/Courtesy of the Qatar Stars League







Ashkan Dejagah was only an infant when his parents packed up the entire family and moved to Germany, but for anyone who questions his loyalty to Iran and the country's cause on the football fields of the world, the man with the neck of a tattoo-adorned bull leaves no room for doubt.

"It was a big thing for me, to decide to play for Iran," says the former Germany youth team player.

"I spoke to my family, and for them it was always about what I wanted in my heart. This is what you have to do.

"In my heart I was born in Iran, I have a lot of family there and my parents are Iranian, my wife is also Iranian so why not Iran? I love Iran and I'm proud to be Iranian."

There is no sense of regret when Dejagah speaks of his decision to represent Team Melli, despite having been raised in the German system, growing and playing alongside many of those who went on to be crowned world champions in Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium in July.

Instead, he joins a long line of Iranian players with strong links to Germany and the Bundesliga; it is a lineage which stretches back to the mid-to-late 1990s when Iran were re-establishing themselves as a force within

Asian football.

The sight of legends such as Ali Daei, Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Azizi featuring for Bundesliga clubs was a major influence on the young, impressionable Dejagah, then

"IN MY HEART I WAS BORN IN IRAN, I HAVE A LOT OF FAMILY THERE AND MY PARENTS ARE IRANIAN, MY WIFE IS ALSO IRANIAN SO WHY NOT IRAN? I LOVE IRAN AND I'M PROUD TO BE IRANIAN."

growing up in Berlin and hoping to forge his own career in the professional ranks.

"I saw the last Asian Cup on the TV and the World Cup in France and in Germany," he says.

"I was always watching Iran because I have Iranian friends in Germany so we always tried to watch the Iranian games.

"There were a lot of good players who played in Germany, like Ali Daei, Khodadad Azizi, Karim Bagheri. All these players played in Germany when I was a kid, but my favourite player was Ali Karimi, because he was – and he still is – an amazing player for me. It was really nice because I played my first two or three games for the national team

together with him and he helped me a lot in the games. For me, Ali Karimi is still a big player.

"I knew Mehdi Mahdavia. I played a couple of times against him and also Vahid Hashemian and I think in 1998 in France they had a great team and big players, and after the World Cup in France, the German teams took them. There were so many at that time. People also forget Daei, Karimi and Hashemian played for Bayern Munich, one of the biggest clubs in the world."

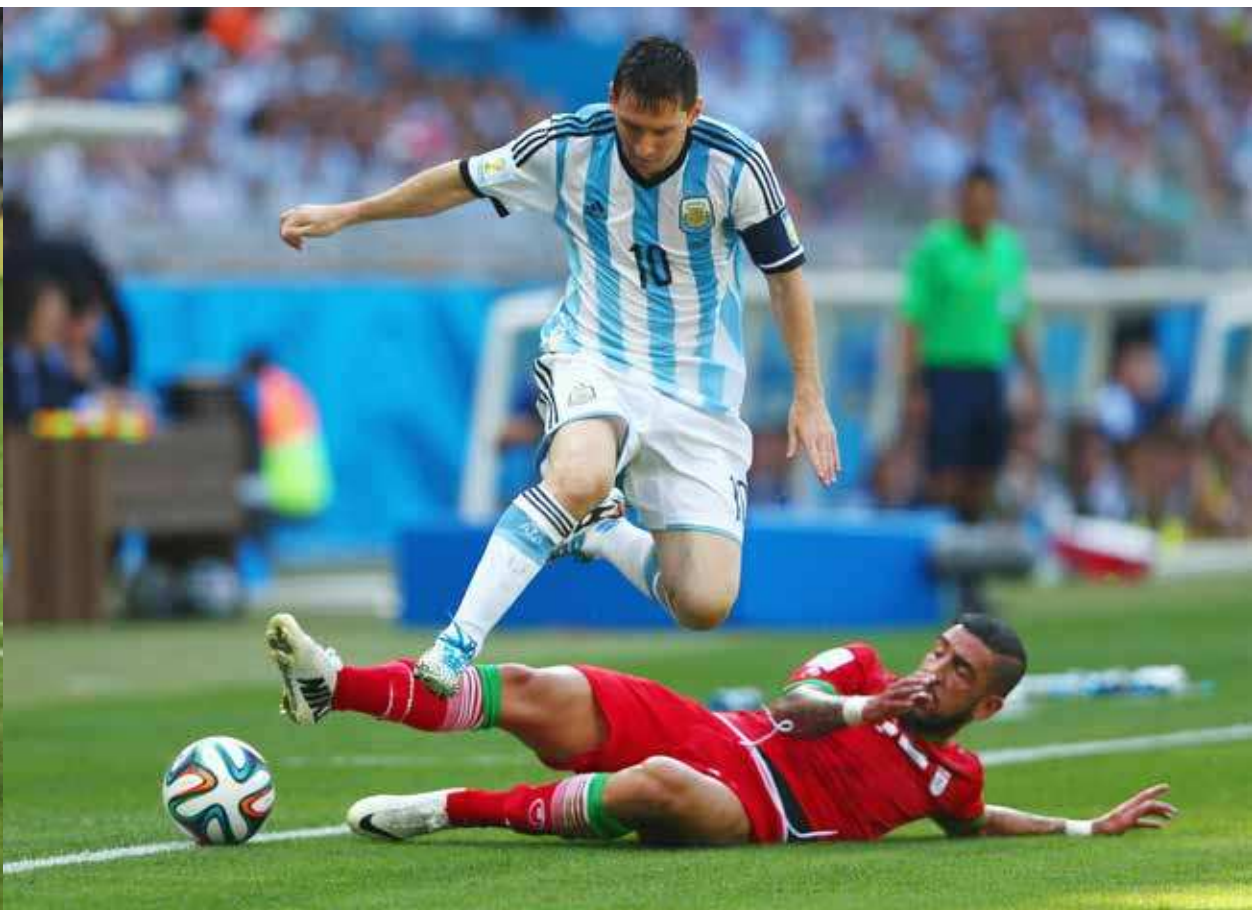
It was, with this in mind, that Dejagah took the decision to represent the land of his birth, despite having played for Germany at every stage from U-17 to U-21 level.

His debut came against Qatar in qualifying for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in February 2012, and before long, he was exposed to the incomparable atmosphere of Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

"Even for me, I have played a lot in big stadiums, but my first time in Iran it was crazy," he says.

"I was shocked when I came out and I saw the people. It was amazing. I really enjoy every time I play in Tehran.

"I'll never forget the game against South Korea when we played at home in the qualification, we had a red card. There were 100,000 in the stadium and we scored for 1-0 and I thought the stadium is going to break! It



was crazy.

"I always enjoying playing in Tehran and hopefully we can give the people something back for the support they always give us."

That support helped ensure Iran qualified for the FIFA World Cup finals in Brazil, sending Team Melli to the tournament for the fourth time in their history and setting up meetings with Nigeria, Argentina and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Expectations were low, but after a battling draw with the Nigerians in their opening game, Iran went close to pulling off the shock of the group stages before losing to a fine injury time strike by Lionel Messi against Argentina.

With hopes of a place in the knockout rounds still alive, though, Iran succumbed to a 3-1 loss against the Bosnians, but Queiroz and his team left Brazil with their dignity intact and their reputation enhanced.

"I think it was a great time for me, because it was the first World Cup of my career," says Dejagah of his summer in South America.

"I think we did quite well in Brazil with Iran, also the game against Argentina was a big game for the country and we did well. We took just one point but I think all of the players did well there and we were a little bit of a surprise for the other teams.

"After the Argentina game I was shocked. We played so well against Argentina and it

Top Left Playing for Qatar's Al Arabi

Bottom Left Playing for Fulham

Above 2014 FIFA World Cup

Left 2010 FIFA World Cup qualifier against Korea Republic at Azadi Stadium

"I THINK WE DID QUITE WELL IN BRAZIL WITH IRAN, ALSO THE GAME AGAINST ARGENTINA WAS A BIG FOR THE COUNTRY AND WE DID WELL. WE TOOK JUST ONE POINT BUT I THINK ALL OF THE PLAYERS DID WELL THERE AND WE WERE A LITTLE BIT OF A SURPRISE FOR THE OTHER TEAMS."

was hard after the game to accept this 1-0 for Argentina, but I think we showed to the whole world that we can play against big teams."

Much of the credit for the performance went to Queiroz and the work done on the training field to prepare the Iranians for the task in Brazil and Dejagah feels the Portuguese coach will be a key component in his country's push for a first AFC Asian Cup title since 1976.

"He's a fantastic coach and I'm really proud to play for him and to work with him,"

he says.

"Against Bosnia, after the game, he spoke to the players and, honestly, it was something in my career that I have never seen before. A lot of players were close to crying or were crying because he worked so hard with us and with all his heart.

"All of the players were happy to work with him and he gave every player a lot of confidence and we learned a lot of good things with him. I think that's why we did well at the World Cup, the players are happy with him and I'm really happy because he is staying with us. It's a big step for Iran for the future.

"I think we have a big chance at the Asian Cup because now I think we have shown the whole world what we can do on the pitch and all of the teams now have a lot of expectations for us and we have to show games like we did against Argentina in the Asian Cup, especially for the Iranian people. I think they are always behind us. I have never seen fans like that. They are really enjoying with their heart the game and I hope for them that we can do something big in this Asian Cup."

While Iran went to the FIFA World Cup with few expectations, at the AFC Asian Cup in Australia the Persians will be expected to take control of games in the group stages against the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain





Top Right
Iran coach Carlos Queiroz

Left, Above & Bottom Right
FIFA World Cup 2010 Qualifiers

and Qatar before pushing on to mount a serious challenge for the title once more.

Iran have not progressed beyond the quarter-finals at the AFC Asian Cup since 1996, when one of the finest teams of their generation were eliminated in the semi-finals by Saudi Arabia.

The onus is on Dejagah and company, therefore, to make an impact in Australia, but despite that, the 28-year-old does not expect Queiroz to dramatically alter the tactics that have served Iran so well since the coach's arrival.

"The Asian Cup will be a little bit different, but I don't think Carlos wants to change a lot in our tactics, because we always play like that, not just at the World Cup," he says.

"We also played that way in our qualification matches, that's his style.

"Now, in world football, you have to work on defence a lot because that's where the game starts. We will try to attack more and play forwards, but I think Carlos Queiroz is not going to change the whole system and say to us we need to attack and forget about defence.

"The people are saying that, now it's the Asian Cup and Iran is a favourite and that we have to go forward. But no, I don't think so. We can go forward, but at the World Cup we showed a lot of good defence, this is our tactic, and I think we

will do the same in Australia but with a little bit more counterattacking."

Despite Iran's convincing performances in qualifying for both the FIFA World Cup and the AFC Asian Cup, Dejagah does not believe the Iranians will have an easy ride at the tournament.

But there is one thing he is hoping for: a reunion with former Wolfsburg team mate Makoto Hasebe, the Japan captain, in the latter stages of the tournament.

"Now there are a lot of teams that are playing well, and there are no easy games in the world now," he says.

"Every game is hard. Teams learn how to defend, so it's always difficult to beat also the smaller teams.

"In our group we have the Emirates, who have a good team, and also Qatar is also hard to play against. We have to focus on our game and work from game to game, and for sure there are also big teams like Australia, Japan, South Korea and Uzbekistan, I think they are a good team too. It will be a good Asian Cup in January.

"Makoto and I played together at Wolfsburg for at least four years, maybe five years, so I know him very well, he's a good player, a great player and I know he's a big player in Japan. He has a lot of experience and hopefully I can see him because it's been a long time since I saw him. Maybe in the final, why not?"



Ashkan Dejagah

Nationality: Iran

DOB: 05/06/1986

Position: Midfielder

Current club:

Al Arabi
(Qatar)

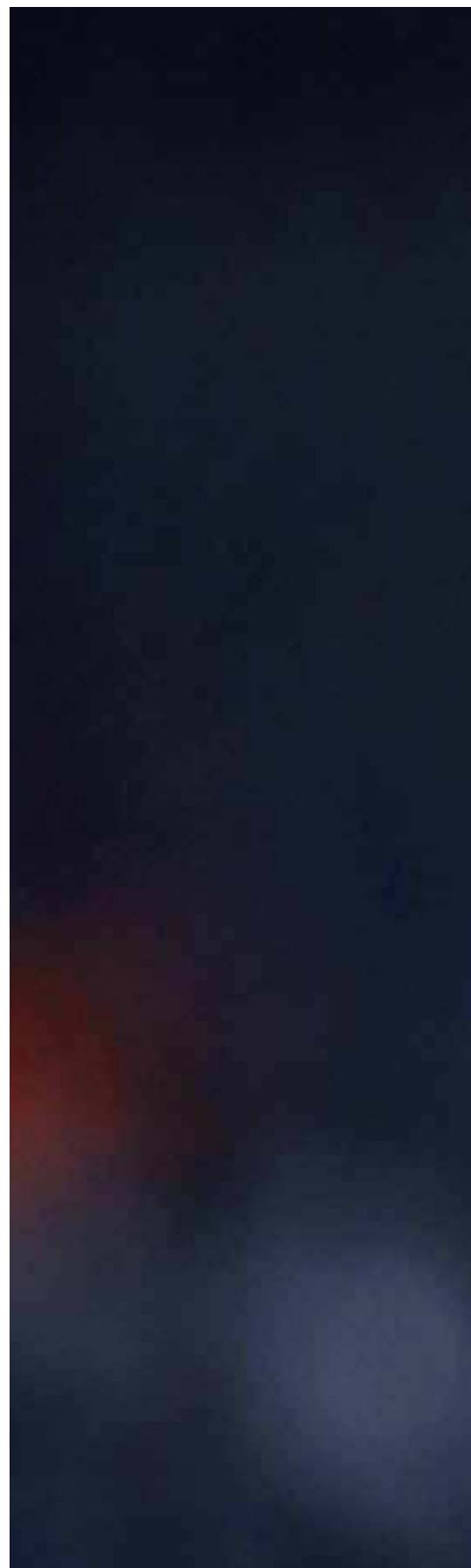
Previous clubs:

Hertha BSC
Wolfsburg
(both Germany)
Fulham (England)



RELUCTANT HERO

TAKESHI OKADA IS THE ONLY ASIAN COACH TO TAKE HIS NATION TO THE FINALS OF THE FIFA WORLD CUP TWICE, SUCCESSFULLY STEERING JAPAN TO FRANCE IN 1998 AND SOUTH AFRICA 12 YEARS LATER. BUT, AFTER A CAREER THAT HAS DELIVERED J.LEAGUE TITLES AND A STINT IN CHINA, THE FORMER AFC COACH OF THE YEAR SAYS IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE.







Twice Takeshi Okada has emerged from the shadows to take the helm of the Japan national team; on both occasions he made history.

There can be few more significant individuals in the recent history of Japanese football; big name players and foreign coaches have come and gone, but the 58-year-old remains an icon of the Samurai Blue, the man who broke new ground, the coach who was unable to say no to his country.

Today, Japanese football sits atop the continental scene: Japan have won four AFC Asian Cup titles and go to Australia in January 2015 as the defending champions; in addition, the country has qualified for five successive finals of the FIFA World Cup.

Okada's twin stints as national team coach virtually bookend Japan's most successful period on the global stage: he was the man who steered the country to their first-ever FIFA World Cup finals, and he was also the first coach to take the nation to the knockout phase on foreign soil.

That he managed those achievements at tournaments 12 years apart underlines both his longevity and significance to Japanese football.

But when Okada was asked to take over

the helm of the national team midway through qualifying for the 1998 tournament in France during a road trip through Central Asia, the landscape in which Japanese football found itself was very different.

The J.League was still in its infancy, experiencing significant growing pains after its burning, phosphorous-bright birth in 1993, a year after the nation's first-ever AFC Asian Cup win on home soil.

Qualifying for the FIFA World Cup was proving difficult, after going agonisingly close to booking a berth in the United States in 1994 – losing infamously and painfully to Iraq in injury time in Qatar to send Korea Republic to the finals – Japan's road to France was becoming bumpier by the day.

Shu Kamo, under whom Okada served as assistant coach, was fired following a draw in Kazakhstan that represented Japan's third game in a row without a win; in his place came a former national team defender with no experience as a frontline coach.

"I was 41 years old and in my first head coaching job," says Okada, still seemingly bewildered by the decision 17 years after being handed the reins to replace Kamo in the Kazakh capital Almaty.

"I had a lot of pressure from the media and from the supporters because I was Japanese, they said I was too young and had

no experience. And that was true. But I had to give it my best, 100%."

There is no denying Okada was thrown in at the deep end, but he managed, slowly, to steady the ship. After another pair of draws – against Uzbekistan in Tashkent and the United Arab Emirates at National Stadium in Tokyo – Okada's Japan's notched up an impressive 2-0 win against Korea Republic in Seoul.

The nation's bid for a FIFA World Cup debut appearance was back on track, and a 5-1 win over Kazakhstan ensured Japan's dream stayed alive, sealing a spot in a play-off with Iran to determine Asia's third berth in the FIFA World Cup draw in Marseille later that year.

Qualification, though, was no foregone conclusion. The Iran team that stood between Japan and France was arguably the best in Asia at the time: less than two years earlier, a side made up of Ali Daei, Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Azizi dazzled and impressed before falling short of winning the country's first AFC Asian Cup title since 1976.

The Japanese were facing off against a team boasting natural talent allied with huge desire, with the winner going to France, while the loser went into a two-legged play-off with Australia, winners of Oceania's qualifying tournament.

Johor Bahru, just over the causeway the separates Malaysia and Singapore, was to



be the venue for the one-off clash, and in the hours leading up to the game the stands were turned blue by the expectant travelling support from Japan.

In a crackling atmosphere, the outcome was not determined until virtually the last kick of the game, deep into extra-time. For Okada, there was to be relief all around when Masayuki Okano scored what will always be one of the most famous goals in the history of Japanese football.

"I believed that Johor Bahru was not the last game; we knew if we didn't win we would play against Australia, but I didn't think that we would be able at that stage to beat the Australians," says Okada.

"So, for me, this was the last chance to qualify for the World Cup. I had luck because Karim Bagheri was suspended and he was the most important player for Iran.

"So, we had a chance and if we lost I couldn't go back to Japan. At my house, there was always a police car protecting my house and the police said to my wife that it was a dangerous situation for my children and told her to take them to and from school by car.

"Being national team coach is a crazy job, especially when you're from the same country, because of family. I think at elementary school and many other times my son cried because everyone was shouting at

Far Left
1998 FIFA World Cup

Top Left 2005 AFC Champions
League with Yokohama F. Marinos

Above 2010 FIFA World
Cup qualifiers

Bottom Left
1998 Dynasty Cup

him about me. It's a difficult job."

The only raised voices in southern Malaysia that balmy November evening were from jubilant Japanese fans, who thronged the streets long into the night to celebrate Japan's qualification for the FIFA World Cup. The anguish had ended, the Agony of Doha consigned to history, and a month later the draw threw up a new challenge: Argentina, Croatia and Jamaica lay in wait.

The inexperience of Japan – and their coach – showed in France, with three successive defeats, losing 1-0 to Argentina and Croatia before dominating against the Jamaicans but, ultimately, losing 2-1.

"It was my mistake because we had the possibility to beat them," says Okada of the game against the Reggae Boyz at Lyon's Stade Gerland, in which Masashi Nakayama scored Japan's first-ever World Cup goal.

"We weren't at the same level as we had been in the games before. We lost two games and my mentality and motivation went down. It's not good.

"Against Croatia, they only had two chances. My memories of these three games,

they weren't bad. The results weren't good, but the performances weren't bad. When I was head coach, the media said qualifying for the World Cup was a result. To many Japanese, style is very important. But winning is the most important thing."

Okada returned to Japan and stepped down from his position, taking a sabbatical before reemerging at the helm of Consadole Sapporo, then in the J.League's second division and as far from the limelight of the Tokyo-based media as Japanese professional football would allow.

After a season essentially learning his trade, Okada secured the second division title with Sapporo, sealing promotion before departing to take on a much higher profile post, pitching up at big spending Yokohama F. Marinos at the beginning of 2003.

His impact was immediate as Marinos won back-to-back J.League titles playing attacking, vibrant football with a side chockfull of quality: Japan stars Naoki Matsuda and Yuji Nakazawa marshalled the defence, Brazilian Dutra provided thrust from left back, Daisuke Oku the creativity in midfield and Korean FIFA World Cup star Ahn Jung-hwan scored the goals.

By the end of 2006, with two league titles and a runners-up position in 2005 plus successive J.League Manager of the Year Awards in his personal trophy cabinet, Okada



stepped down, retreating once again from the glare of the country's intrusive media.

Less than a year later, though, a phone call from the Japan Football Association in the weeks after national team boss Ivica Osim had been hospitalised following a stroke would turn Okada's world upside down yet again.

"The federation called me, and I met the staff in a hotel in Tokyo," says Okada. "I live in Tamagawa and when I left my house I said to my wife: 'I will refuse the job, OK, no problem'. But when we talked, I felt no other Japanese coach would get this offer. I saw a big cliff, and I wanted to climb this cliff. I must climb this cliff.

"In my head, I knew I should refuse, but in my heart I knew I must take it and I said yes. When I went home, my wife said: 'You always do this!' So, a few days in the future, I analysed myself and if I had refused then maybe a foreign coach would come in and say there was no time, it was a difficult job and have a reason to refuse. I don't like that. I'm Japanese and I have pride. Normally Japanese have a complex with foreigners, if they lose it's OK but I don't like that. I want to show that Japanese people can do the same as a foreigner."

Back in control of Japan, Okada was

charged with not only qualifying for South Africa 2010, but with making more of an impact at the tournament than had been the case under Zico in Germany in 2006, when they finished bottom of their group with just a solitary point.

Qualification was secured with relative comfort, but doubts remained about the team. A 3-0 loss in a friendly match against Korea Republic at Saitama Stadium just weeks before departing for Johannesburg saw Japanese fans erupt with fury as Park Ji-sung dismantled the home defence.

"Honestly speaking, six months before that game I felt with this style and these members at the World Cup it would be very difficult, but the timing was hard," says Okada. "If we had made changes before, the players would have been complaining and saying that things weren't so bad. Why change?"

"I waited for the right time and after the Korea game, I decided now is the time to make the changes, for the defence and the goalkeeper and to make Shunsuke Nakamura a reserve. It was a good time for me. If we had drawn or won, we couldn't make the change and the World Cup would have been very difficult."

Having failed to impress in the build up to their appearance in South Africa, expectations

for a successful FIFA World Cup were low. But under little pressure, Japan excelled: a 1-0 win over Cameroon was followed by a loss by the same scoreline against the Netherlands before a remarkable 3-1 victory over Denmark saw Japan stride into the Round of 16.

"Before the first game everybody was saying the team was no good, but the Japanese people, when we are in that kind of situation have a good relationship together," says Okada.

"We come together in those situations and the players talked together honestly. Normally, Japanese players don't do that but they talked together honestly and the relationships were strong and we won the first game and we went forward from there. I was surprised. They changed.

"In 2010, before the World Cup, it was the same situation as after France, there was a lot of criticism because Osim was a superstar, so they compared me to Osim. 'If Osim was here, it would be better,' they said. Every time Osim, Osim. But I didn't hear it.

"When I became the head coach, I didn't watch television, I didn't read the newspaper or magazines, I didn't listen to the radio because I wanted to be like a foreign coach. I believed in myself, because that's the only way to be the head coach of a national team.



Far Left FIFA World Cup 2010 Qualifiers



Left FIFA World Cup 2010

Above Okada joined China's Hangzhou Greentown in 2012.

"In the first game against Cameroon, after that everything changed. Everything changed, but I didn't change. I was the same before and after the match. In the next game against Holland, I wanted to win, but it's difficult. The score was 0-1 but I felt there was a big difference between the teams.

"The next game, against Denmark, I felt we had the possibility to beat them. I estimated the score would be 1-0, but it was unbelievable. It was a good performance. In the first 10 minutes Jon Dahl Tomasson missed two big chances and if he had got one of those it would be have been difficult, but we had luck."

Ultimately, Japan's run ended with a penalty shootout loss against Paraguay, but their exit did not stop fans enthusiastically welcoming the team upon their return home.

"After the World Cup, we came back to Japan and I was surprised that there were so many people there and they celebrated with us," says Okada. "We were disappointed because we had a chance to beat Paraguay, but we lost. But they were celebrating. When we left there were only maybe 50 people at

the airport, but when we came back there were so many people. It was incredible."

Once more, Okada stood down from his post only to return to frontline action at the start of 2012. This time, though, the destination was new: Hangzhou Greentown in the Chinese Super League. A new country and a new league brought with them a new series of challenges.

"I had some offers from the J.League but those offers were not a challenge for me, I wanted a new challenge and China, I don't know it," he says. "But I read a book by an American writer at that time and he said after the problems of the United States against Russia, that many people thought there would be peace in the world. But no, there would be many small fights, especially in the east of Asia between China, Japan and Korea.

"I don't like to think that, because I have three children. We have had 60 years and no war, but now the economy is going down and there are problems so I wanted to do something for my children. Country borders are like this, but football can be like a border and we must make a new border. I'm

interested in China, it's a big country and they will become the biggest country in the world economically and politically and I wanted to see that. It was a big challenge for me too.

"Everyone says the Chinese are different to the Japanese, even the Chinese coaches said that, but I don't think so. We're humans and we're footballers. After two years they changed. Their mentality changed. It can change. And if Chinese society can change, then Chinese football can change."

After two seasons, Okada stepped down from the position as head coach but continues to serve Hangzhou as an advisor although, after a remarkable career, he has no plans to add to his illustrious coaching resume.

"My wife and I are almost 60 years old and in 10 years time we'll be 70, so for the next 10 years we can still do a lot," says the 2010 AFC Coach of the Year. "I've always thought of myself, but for the next 10 years I must think of my wife. My wife and I are thinking about the future.

"In the J.League, the coaches now are almost all my players or my coaches, so there's no motivation for me to work there. And they would have the motivation to beat me. And I would never go back to the national team. Never."

HONOUR AND PRIDE

SINCE MAKING HIS DEBUT
FOR THE PHILIPPINES IN
2005, PHIL YOUNGHUSBAND
HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE
IN THE AZKALS' RISE TO
BECOME ONE OF
SOUTH EAST ASIA'S LEADING
SIDES HAVING BEEN
PERSUADED TO PURSUE HIS
FILIPINO HERITAGE.

By: Andrew Mullen Photos: World Sport Group/Courtesy of Mark Cristino

A unique route may have brought Phil Younghusband to the Philippines national team, but after officials within the archipelago were made aware of his heritage by an alert computer game enthusiast, the striker has played a central role in shaping a bright future for the improving Azkals.

The 27-year-old, along with older brother James, began his career in the junior set-up of English Premier League side Chelsea having been born to an English father and Filipino mother.

Aware of their Filipino heritage but unsure about what to do with that information, Phil and James progressed through the ranks of the London club until their careers

headed in a new direction in early 2005.

"We were with the youth team as I was 18 and James was 19, and we were called in by the academy director and he asked us how interested we would be to play for the Philippines," says Younghusband, who currently plays for United Football League (UFL) first division side Loyola Meralco Sparks alongside brother James.

"We were still young at the time, and when you play in England you think you might play for England, but when the opportunity came to play for the Philippines we didn't hesitate at all and we thought it was an honour and we were very proud to represent the Philippines."

And Phil and James eventually featured for the hosts at the South East Asian Games later that year as







the Azkals' U-23 side missed out on a place in the knockout stage after narrow defeats by Thailand and Malaysia either side of a win over Cambodia.

"It was amazing because we didn't know what football was like in the Philippines at the time," says Younghusband.

"It was amazing. Our initial reaction was that football is obviously very big in the Philippines."

For the Younghusband's, though, bigger and better things were yet to come with the Philippines, although first the brothers had to deal with a common experience for a large segment of aspiring players.

With the arrival of the Roman Abramovich era at Chelsea slowly limiting their chances of first team football, elder brother James first saw his contract expire in 2006.

And after Younghusband first spent a short spell on loan with Danish side Esbjerg in 2007 which was eventually cut short due to injury, his time with Chelsea ended a year later after 11 years with the club.

And having seen older brother James struggle to find a club in the lower

leagues in England, Younghusband took the brave decision to remain in the Philippines having been part of the squad which missed out on a place in the 2008 AFC Challenge Cup on goal difference.

"I was still under contract, but I came for international duty in May 2008 and even though I still had a couple of months left on my contract, I came to play in the 2008 Challenge Cup qualifiers which were in the Philippines and I actually never went back to England," says Younghusband.

That decision led to a break from football for almost two years, and with his brother playing in the 2010 AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers in 2009, Younghusband tried his hand at modelling and showbiz activities.

The brothers, who both hold UEFA coaching badges, also set up the Younghusband Football Academy which was established in 2010.

"If you want Philippine football to progress, you need a grassroots programme," says Younghusband.

"It is something that once we stop playing we want to concentrate full-time on, but it is something that we are now very active with and very hands on with

and something we want to grow and progress."

The turning point finally arrived in 2010 as new management took control of the national team and the brothers returned to the international fold ahead of that year's AFF Suzuki Cup after Chelsea had advised Younghusband to miss the 2007 tournament.

And after the Philippines lost to Malaysia and Thailand before drawing with Myanmar in 2007, expectations were considerably lower ahead of the 2010 edition as the Philippines lined up against co-hosts Vietnam, Singapore and Myanmar.

But the Philippines opened with a 1-1 draw against Singapore before Younghusband scored as the Azkals beat Vietnam in front of a capacity crowd at My Dinh National Stadium.

"To win in Vietnam was probably the best experience of my international career," says Younghusband.

"And when we got back to the hotel the response was amazing and the Twitter world went crazy and that's when the media got involved."

And the Philippines rounded off their unbeaten group stage campaign with a



Phil Younghusband

Nationality:
Philippines

DOB:
04/08/1987

Position:
Striker

Current club:
Loyola Meralco Sparks
(Philippines)

Previous clubs:
Chelsea (England)
Esbjerg (Denmark)
San Beda (Philippines)

Top Left 2012 AFC
Challenge Cup

Bottom Left Phil (right)
with elder brother James and
sister Keri.

Left 2012 AFF
Suzuki Cup

Above 2014 AFC
Challenge Cup

goalless draw against Myanmar to earn a semi-final with Indonesia.

A pair of 1-0 defeats did end the Philippines' campaign, but with the success bringing with it a wave of media attention and support, the Younghusband brothers both joined San Beda in the newly reintroduced National Men's Club Championship in 2011.

"I was there between 2008 and 2010 and there wasn't a lot of support for the league financially. But since the success of the national team and the media attention, the financial backing came with the support of private companies and everyone was aware about the Philippines and the team and it was easy to sell the Azkals with the success story," says Younghusband.

Younghusband then scored a tournament-leading six goals as the Philippines finished third at the 2012 AFC Challenge Cup before returning to the semi-finals of the AFF Suzuki Cup.

"Expectations were slightly different ahead of the 2012 Suzuki Cup and we now expect we have to win these competitions,"

adds Younghusband.

"The quality we have in our team is amazing and to think where we have come from in the last four or five years, it is really amazing, and now the expectations have totally changed."

Expectations increased, the Philippines headed to the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup eyeing a place at the 2015 AFC Asian Cup, with the winners in the Maldives taking the 16th and final qualification place for the showpiece continental championship.

Younghusband missed the opening draw with Afghanistan due to suspension before returning to help the Azkals top Group B following wins over Laos and Turkmenistan.

But after edging out the Maldives 3-2 after extra-time in the semi-finals, the Azkals lost the final 1-0 to Palestine to miss out on a first-ever AFC Asian Cup appearance with Younghusband missing the Philippines' best chance in the first half after being played through by Stephan Schrock.

"You don't get many chances against good teams and when you do get one, you have to take it," said Younghusband immediately after the final.

"But this is a step further than we did last time. We have got the AFF Championship to look forward to. The way the team is playing we feel like we have progressed, but with the result we just feel disappointed."

And having experienced the step up in class which would have been on offer in Australia during the qualifiers for the 2014 FIFA World Cup as the Philippines reached the second round for the first time after beating Sri Lanka before losing to Kuwait, Younghusband hopes that is only a taste of what is to come in the future for the Azkals.

"We know that the level is very high and it is a reality check. You are winning games in South East Asia, but it is a shock when you play against a team who are as strong as Kuwait and that brought us right down to the ground," says Younghusband.

"There is still a long way to go, but we feel the potential there and we can reach that level if we set our standards and set our objectives we can reach it."



DREAM BECOMING REALITY

AFTER YEARS OF DECLINE THAT BELIE THEIR RICH HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN ASIAN FOOTBALL, HONG KONG'S DOMESTIC SCENE AND REPRESENTATIVE SIDE ARE ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY WITH CHANGE SWEEPING THROUGH THE SPORT.

By: Daniel Pordes Photos: World Sport Group/Courtesy of Hong Kong Football Association







Above Hong Kong' South China participated in the 2014 AFC Champions League play-offs.

Left Hong Kong's Kitchee in the 2014 AFC Cup.

Below Hong Kong Football Association Chairman Brian Leung (left) with AFC President Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa (right) and FIFA President Sepp Blatter.

ne of the 12 founding members of the Asian Football Confederation and the host of the inaugural AFC Asian Cup in 1956, Hong Kong has a rich heritage and history in the continental game. But despite the presence of a football federation that this year officially celebrated its centennial, making it one of the oldest in Asia, the last two decades have seen such a decline, that far-reaching changes in the Special Administrative Region have been needed to haul the game back from a downward spiral.

Placed in FIFA's top 100 sides as recently as 1996, Hong Kong's ranking has plummeted steadily downwards and they now sit below Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia at 164th as of September's rankings.

1914

Hong Kong Football Association founded

The domestic game, too, has in the main dwindled since its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s when heated derbies were well attended and popular, with local teams now struggling to attract both supporters and sponsors.

Attendances and club finances have fallen significantly with local interest switching to televised games from Europe and with it sponsors and potential stars of the game, both foreign and domestic, moving to other fields.

But with the appointment of Brian Leung as Hong Kong Football Association Chairman

164

Hong Kong's FIFA ranking in September

in 2007, a move to bring in both internal and external aid began.

"When I took over the role of Hong Kong Association Chairman in 2007, I felt we definitely needed a lot of change. I saw Hong Kong football was going down the drain and I felt I needed to try and do something to halt this slide," says Leung, who successfully petitioned the Hong Kong Legislative Council to pass a bill that would bring in consultants for an in-depth study on how to save Hong Kong football.

In 2009, a consultancy group were chosen to take on the project and write a football development strategy led by Englishman Mark Sutcliffe.

The nine month project looked at every



aspect of football in Hong Kong and resulted in a strategic plan called "Dare to Dream" that identified both areas of potential and areas of weakness that needed to be improved.

And with the recommendation from "Dare to Dream" that the Hong Kong Football Association work together with the government on producing a strategic plan, Project Phoenix was born.

A three-year strategy starting from November 2011, Project Phoenix would predominantly seek to overhaul and significantly improve the infrastructure of the Hong Kong Football Association and thereby



Below Hong Kong Football Association celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2014.



Above
Kim Pan-gon

Left Hong Kong won a gold medal at the 2009 East Asian Games.

provide the foundation for a raft of changes across the whole spectrum of football.

While former Scottish Rugby Union chief executive Gordon McKie was brought in as the new chief executive to oversee the new changes, the relationship did not pan out and Sutcliffe himself was subsequently

33

Recommendations under Project Phoenix

offered the role to begin implementing his own recommendations.

"There were 33 recommendations in Project Phoenix, and really most of them were about

laying foundations because transformation of a sport is a long process. It's really a 10-15 year project before you see the full results," says Sutcliffe, who began his new role in September 2012.

"The first step was in improving the governance and management of the Football Association itself. Due to the lack of funding in the Football Association, there were just 20-30 people in our office who were struggling. So, through Project Phoenix, we levered in HK\$60 million over three years. And this was mainly used for headcount – we have more than doubled the staff to 60-70 employees.

"We brought in a completely new, comprehensive technical department now with a head coach, technical director, and academy coach, and they have team of assistant coaches working for them.

"We have a grassroots football manager, futsal manager, coach education manager, women's football manager – none of these posts were in place prior to Project Phoenix."

As well as infrastructure reforms at the Hong Kong Football Association, changes to the club systems was brought in to lay the grounds for the Hong Kong Premier League, a re-working of a league that is one of Asia's oldest, able to trace its history back to 1908.



In an effort to introduce higher degrees of professionalism, standards, and financial accountability and governance amongst the club sides, a licence – modelled on AFC Champions League standards – was introduced for all Hong Kong sides wishing to take part in the new division that features a new title sponsor and free-to-air TV broadcast deal.

“We’re confident the new league system and licences will improve the quality of play on the pitch, not with an immediate impact, but in the long-term. Particularly in the criteria of the clubs regarding youth development,” says Sutcliffe.

“The big change for us, though, is the regulation on governance and transparency of finances and the quality of the management and infrastructures of the clubs – that will help move them to the next level.

“Hopefully it will convince the fans, media and sponsors that Hong Kong football is cleaning up.”

With the Football Association now raised to modern standards and the Hong Kong Premier League having kicked off its inaugural season in September, the initial funding and Project Phoenix will come to an end in October.

The next step is a five-year player development plan called “Aiming Higher Together” which seeks to introduce a systematic and co-ordinated approach to football development involving 18 key targets.

One of these is the creation of a Hong Kong Football Curriculum that includes emphasis on producing a ‘Hong Kong style’ that can help the representative side become more competitive in Asia

2014

Hong Kong made their debut at the AFC U-16 Championship

Chief among those charged with developing the new playing system is Hong Kong head coach Kim Pan-gon, a Korean national with a long history of involvement in Hong Kong football having been both a player and coach in the city since 2000, with spells at Instant-Dict, Hong Kong Rangers and South China as well as representative team coach from 2009-2010.

“We had to take a look at other similar countries to see the style they play and whether we could modify it suit us,” explains Kim, who returned to the Hong Kong senior team helm in November 2012 and has been Academy Head Coach since 2011.

“Our players cannot play a physical style because we are not especially big or strong, but we are agile. We are not tough, but smart. We can’t use power, but we can use the ball. These elements concluded that we should play a technical style similar to the likes of Spain, Mexico or Chile.

“I also learnt a lot from the UAE team that we played against in the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers last year, their passing game, mobility and dynamism in the middle – especially from the player Omar Abdulrahman – made a big impression on me and they could be a good model for us, too.”

Although the new curriculum, which will cover all aspects of football from grassroots to elite level and includes modules on men’s and boy’s, women’s and girls’ football, futsal and coach education, is not anticipated until next year, progress is already tangible amongst the next generation after Hong Kong took part in the AFC U-16 Championship for the first time in September.

“I went to see our U-15 side play our U-17 team recently and it was so encouraging. Everyone wanted the ball, everyone passed the ball – such a difference from when I played here in 2000,” adds Kim.

“Our future is very positive. In five to 10 years’ time, we hope to see a top 120 ranking, a competitive and attractive league, our clubs in the AFC Champions League and all age groups qualifying for every AFC tournament.

“It’s a big hope, but why not? With our new infrastructure, youth development and football curriculum coming in next year, it is an exciting time to be involved with Hong Kong football.”



Left Hong Kong participated in the 2014 AFC U-16 Championship.

Above U-16 coach Xavi Bravo

Right Chief Executive Mark Sutcliffe



Q&A



**Hong Kong
Football
Association
Chairman
Brian Leung**

What part has the HKFA played in the growth of football in Hong Kong?

Once we had the infrastructure at the Hong Kong Football Association in place, the next step we focused specifically on was youth development. We have brought in an academy director and coaches and established league systems for all age-groups in Hong Kong. Players from eight-years-old up to 20-years-old all have regular competitive leagues and systems in place. And with our improved infrastructure we are now able to take advantage of many more programs implemented by both the AFC and FIFA to help with youth development as well as being in the process of working with the government on a new HK\$1Billion training centre at Tseung Kwan O.

What is the next step for football in Hong Kong?

We have a lot of potential in our youth teams; I can see that the U-14 and U-16 representative teams are getting a lot better over the last few years. My goal will be for the team to rank among the top 100 teams in the next five years. For the Hong Kong Premier League, I hope we can attract more fans, more TV coverage and more sponsors. I hope that this will help raise the standards of the teams so that they can compete regularly in the AFC Champions League and that our players will become sought after from overseas clubs in Asia including China, Japan and Korea Republic. In the future, say in 10 years' time or so, we want to send a team to compete in mainland China's league system. Although we'd have to work our way up from say China League Two upwards, it would be a newly-formed team so as not to affect our own league.

DOING IT IN STYLE

KHAMPHENG SAYAVUTTHI'S OVERHEAD BICYCLE KICK IN LAOS' OPENING GAME OF THE 2014 AFC CHALLENGE CUP MAY HAVE BROUGHT THE STRIKER WORLDWIDE ATTENTION, BUT AHEAD OF THE QUALIFIERS FOR THE 2014 AFF SUZUKI CUP WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN LAOS IN OCTOBER, THE THAILAND-BASED FORWARD IS LOOKING FOR THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATION TO BUILD ON MAY'S OUTING IN THE MALDIVES.

By: Andrew Mullen • Photo: World Sport Group

If you are going to score your country's first-ever goal at a continental tournament, you may as well do it in style.

And Laos' Khampheng Sayavutthi certainly did that with a spectacular overhead bicycle kick against

Turkmenistan at the AFC Challenge Cup earlier this year which quickly turned the striker into an internet sensation.

Laos had secured a place in the Maldives as one of the best second-placed teams during qualifying for the final edition of the AFC Challenge Cup, which offered teams the chance to secure a coveted place at the 2015 AFC Asian Cup in Australia.

This was a significant step up for a side who had never played at the FIFA World Cup, AFC Asian Cup or Asian Games, but who had been a regular participant in the AFF Suzuki Cup having participated in the biennial regional competition every year since its inception in 1996.

Laos were drawn in Group B alongside reigning SAFF champions Afghanistan, two-time AFF Suzuki Cup semi-finalists the Philippines and 2010 and 2012 AFC Challenge Cup runners-up Turkmenistan.

And Laos enjoyed the ideal start to their first taste of continental football after 34 minutes against Turkmenistan as Tiny Boumalay's right wing free-kick was flicked on by Soukaphone Vongchiengkham at the near post, and as the looping ball dropped on the edge of the six yard area, Sayavutthi was on hand to dispatch a spectacular overhead kick past goalkeeper Nikita Gorbunov.

"I was always looking to score this first goal. I am very proud for the national team and I am very happy for myself and I am very happy that I can say I was the first

player to score for the Laos national team at an AFC competition," said Sayavutthi, who turned 28 in July.

"I saw the ball come over and I had to make a quick decision and not allow the ball to bounce."

Laos did eventually lose 5-1 to Turkmenistan at Hithadhoo Stadium, and Norio Tsukitate's side would go on to bow out in the group stage following a hard-fought 2-0 defeat by the Philippines and an encouraging goalless draw against Afghanistan.

But the Southeast Asian nation showed significant signs of improvement throughout the tournament, Laos will hope to build on that and extend their AFF Suzuki Cup appearance record as they host the qualifiers for the 2014 edition in October with the top two sides advancing to the end of year regional showpiece.

"We need to improve as fast as possible to catch up with the other countries as they are all improving very fast," added Sayavutthi, who started his career aged 13 with a school team in his home town before joining the Ministry of Communication Transport Post and Construction side, now known as Yotha, in 2006.

"We need to start at the ASEAN level and then look at doing better in the World Cup qualifiers."

Sayavutthi has fond memories of Laos' last appearance at the AFF Suzuki Cup as the striker scored three goals in three games in Malaysia in 2012.

Having also progressed through the qualifiers after finishing second behind Myanmar, Sayavutthi was on the scoresheet in the opening game as Laos shared a commendable 2-2 draw with

Indonesia who needed a late equaliser from Vendry Mofu to earn a share of the spoils.

Laos then lost 4-1 to hosts Malaysia and 4-3 to eventual champions Singapore having taken a two-goal lead in the first half with Sayavutthi on target twice.

A year earlier, Sayavutthi had helped his country reach the second round of qualifiers for the 2014 FIFA World Cup with the striker on target as Laos beat Cambodia 8-6 on aggregate to follow up their feat of reaching the same stage ahead of the 2006 campaign.

China would, though, prove one step too far as Laos lost 13-3 on aggregate to end any hopes of a historic place in the third round.

"My first game for the national team was at the SEA Games in 2007. I was very excited and proud to be selected," added Sayavutthi.

"The AFF Suzuki Cup in 2012 was a great experience for me and I also played in the last World Cup qualifiers against China.

"China have professional players and have a high quality so the gap between us and them was great."

Having made his national team debut for Laos at the 2007 SEA Games, Sayavutthi and his team-mates returned two years later on home soil and topped a group ahead of Singapore, Myanmar and Indonesia with an unbeaten record.

Laos lost to Malaysia in the semi-finals before missing out on a bronze medal after losing the third place play-off to Singapore.

"I remember a game at the SEA Games when Laos hosted the SEA Games," added Sayavutthi.

"We played Myanmar and I scored as we drew, but we missed out on a medal."

Sayavutthi is currently plying his trade with Thai second division side Ang Thong, who he joined in 2013 having played for Khonkaen in the Thai Premier League in 2011.





THE BEGINNING OF NEW DAYS

AFTER AN EIGHT YEAR EXILE,
PARK EUN-SUN RETURNED TO
THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE
AT THE 2014 AFC WOMEN'S
ASIAN CUP TO LEAD KOREA
REPUBLIC TO FOURTH PLACE
AND A TICKET TO THEIR
SECOND APPEARANCE
AT THE FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD CUP FINALS.

By: Daniel Pordes Photos: World Sport Group/Getty Images

Tattooed across Park Eun-sun's inner forearm is the date "12.5.13" and the phrase "The beginning of new days", a permanent reminder of the turbulence the 27-year-old has faced

in her career and the faith that she has of better things to come.

Growing up in a poor family in Seoul as the youngest of three children, Park was first introduced to football by her older brother Park In-eui, although it was in fact basketball that was her first interest.

"But back then, when I was younger, I wasn't that tall so never thought about sports or joining any team or considering it as a future profession," says Park, who is now comfortably one of the most physically imposing players in the

Asian women's game standing at close to 5'10".

"It was between the last year of middle school and first year of high school that I started to get taller. I did grow constantly, of course, but it was those two years that I really experienced a growth spurt.

"When I first started sports I was below 4'9" but by the end of high school, I was one of the tallest in the class."

Park's first taste of playing in a team was not until her final year at Changdeok Girl's Middle School. But soon after, in her first year of high school, she was taking on the boys in the Wirye Information Industry High School playground and her ability - and increasing inches - soon caught the eye of her teacher.

And from that point on Park's rise in the Korean women's game shot up







even faster than her height as she was called up to the national team for the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup three months shy of her 17th birthday.

The tournament in the United States, though, came too early as the Taeguk Nangja's lost all three games to finish bottom of their group on their inaugural appearance at the finals.

A year later, though, the 2004 AFC U-19 Women's Championship was a huge success as they posted a 100% record in the competition, beating Vietnam and Thailand in the quarter-finals and semi-finals before recording a 3-0 victory over hosts China in the final.

And not only was it Korea Republic's maiden Asian title, but it was the first announcement of Park's talents on the continental scene.

Despite then playing as a centre-back for the national side, Park was given a licence to push forward, and she did so to devastating effect in the competition, with her crowning performance in the final where she scored all three goals.

"It was the first time we'd won a tournament on an international level outside of Korea and even thinking about it now it just makes me proud. It's one

of the tournaments that always make me smile when I look back on it," she says.

The 2005 EAFF Women's Cup, hosted in her homeland, was also a personal success with Park scoring in the 2-0 win against China before playing key roles in the subsequent matches against DPR Korea and Japan as the young side, filled with high school and university students, took the title as the first East Asian women's champion.

This was also the first time Park had been played as a striker with the powerful forward now fully grown and causing consternation in the backlines of the traditional Asian powerhouses.

But with the world of women's football there for the taking, things took a sharp downward turn for Park shortly ahead of her 20th birthday when she was faced with a dilemma: go professional and spend the required two years in a university team first, or give up the game altogether.

"By that point I was already a big name so I decided to try to go straight from high school into the professional teams. Because of my family's poor background I couldn't afford not to. I wanted to earn money as quickly as possible. That's

one of the reasons I got into football, so I could support them," says Park.

"This was a problem, though, and I was suspended. It made me very demotivated and so I felt there was no longer any point in continuing to play."

Turning her back on football, Park began working part-time in an attempt to make money and over a five year period her exile from the game included stints selling coffee, electronics and sports merchandise.

Flat-sharing with friends, Park did at times try to rekindle her relationship with football, but it was a stop-start process.

"Sometimes people recognised me at these jobs and said to me, 'Aren't you Park Eun-sun? Why aren't you playing football instead of selling these items?'" says Park.

"I would say 'No, I'm not that person. I'm not a football player.' But even if they insisted I just told them I had quit playing and I liked this job."

But the call of the game was impossible to resist, and after a short-lived return in 2010, Park came back permanently into the domestic football scene in time for the 2012 season with Seoul City Hall Amazones and she netted 10 goals in 20



Park Eun-sun

Nationality: Korea Republic

DOB: 28/01/1985

Position: Striker

Current club:

Rossiyanka WFC
(Russia)

Previous clubs:

Seoul City Hall Amazones
(Korea Republic)

Top Left With coach Yoon Deok-yeo in Vietnam.

Bottom Left Park was named top scorer at the 2014 AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Left Park helped Korea Republic finish fourth at the 2014 AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Above Park represented Korea Republic at the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup.

games.

The next year Park was even better and topped the scorers' table with 19 goals, helping her team to a second place finish.

But instead of celebrating her return to the top of her game, Park was forced to defend her achievements after accusations about her gender from six rival teams' coaches in the WK-League who threatened a boycott if she continued to play.

Park was defended not only by her coach and the general public but also by lawmakers at the government-run Seoul City Sports Council who filed a human rights violation lawsuit.

Despite the widespread support, Park, who had already passed gender testing ahead of the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup amongst other tournaments, suffered during the controversy and needed a visible reminder to help her to get through the period and on the fifth of December 2013, she headed to the tattoo parlour.

"I was in the middle of this controversial situation as this point which is why I decided to get the tattoo to help motivate

me to get through the bad days," says Park.

"The date is written there because it's the day I decided that from now on I'm going to go on, on my own way."

In March, Korea's human rights commission recommended that the six coaches be punished according to the league regulations and two have since resigned.

Park's form continued to suffer, though, and she was not called up for the Cyprus Women's Cup.

However, just a few months later, Park announced her return to the continental scene in the most emphatic style at the 2014 AFC Women's Asian Cup.

With a performance of punishing power the forward showed Asia's finest defences that eight years away had dulled neither her ability nor eye for goal.

The only outfield player in a youthful Korea squad to have experienced the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup, Park scored five goals in the group stage to take the Taeguk Nangja into the semi-

final and with it secure a place in the 2015 FIFA World Cup.

But despite another goal from Park, defending champions Australia were deserved 2-1 winners in their semi-final.

And more disappointment followed in the third-place play-off as Park's unfortunate own-goal helped China to a 2-1 victory.

Nevertheless, the tournament was a success for Park as she earned the top scorer award and the praise of coach Yoon Deok-yeo who tipped her as a player who would "light up the international scene" in Canada next year.

"The last World Cup I played in I didn't achieve much, so I really want to do more in the second World Cup in my lifetime. That's the big goal now. So I will be preparing for that, if I am selected," she says.

"I also want to continue to improve as a player and in the future I'll want to become a coach, something I'd be really interested in, so I can help raise the level of the women's game in my country."

But before that day comes, Park's rollercoaster career is set to swerve in another direction after she agreed to join Russia's Rossiyanika WFC in July.



FORGING THE FUTURE

KOREA REPUBLIC'S
POHANG STEELERS
ARE THE ONLY CLUB TO
HAVE BEEN CROWNED
CHAMPIONS OF ASIA ON
THREE OCCASIONS. NOW
WITH RENEWED FOCUS
ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT,
THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT
FOR ONE OF ASIA'S MOST
SUCCESSFUL CLUBS.





RYU Changhyun

23

posco

12

12

CLUB PROFILE: POHANG STEELERS



With a shade over 520,000 residents, the industrial city of Pohang that lies in the south-east of the Korean peninsula is neither big nor beautiful.

But without question, when it comes to footballing history and success, the citizens of Pohang can lay a confident claim at being the preeminent power in the Korean game.

Represented by the famous black and red striped shirts of Pohang Steelers, the city is home to one of the giants of the K-League and with an honours list to match.

The first and so far only club to be crowned three-time Asian champions when they added the 2009 AFC Champions League trophy to back-to-back victories in the Asian Club Championship in 1997 and 1998, there are none from Beirut to Brisbane who can match their continental achievements.

On top of that, five Korean league titles since 1986 and a record four Korean FA Cup trophies underline their pedigree, with only Seongnam FC, formerly Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma, able to

boast more league titles.

Pohang's history of success, though, was forged in the city's close ties with heavy industry and in particular POSCO, one of the world's largest steelmakers.

Known as Pohang Iron and Steel Company when it was founded in 1968, POSCO founder and first president Park Tae-joon was a keen football enthusiast and swiftly laid the groundwork for the formation of an amateur team on April 1973 with the POSCO Football Club, initially called POSCO Dolphins.

And Park's ambition did not have to wait long for the first sign of silverware for his side as the following year the Dolphins won the 22nd President's Cup, before they clinched the second tier league title in 1982.

Within three years the side had turned professional and became the POSCO Atoms with a first domestic title coming in 1986 and second and third pieces of silverware in 1988 and 1992.

Pohang's domestic success continued as they went on to win the Korean League Cup and FA Cup in 1992 and 1996, but it was the following year, and with it a third name-

change, this time to the present-day moniker of the Steelers, that brought them crashing onto the wider Asian scene.

Led by the powerful trio of sweeper Hong Myung-bo, winger Park Tae-ha, and forward Hwang Sun-hong, the Steelers reached the final of the 16th Asian Club Championship, where they met compatriots and defending champions Seongnam.

Pohang, though, were without the services of Hwang Sun-hong who had been ruled out with one of the many injuries that would blight an otherwise stellar career for club and country.

"At that time, Pohang was one of the strongest sides around. We had many star players like me, Hong Myung-bo, one of the best foreign players in the league in Rade Bogdanovic, and six or seven others who were all part of the Korea Republic national team at the time," said Hwang Sun-hong, who began his professional career at Pohang in 1993, before returning as head coach in 2011.

"During that period, we were confident in ourselves and felt no pressure in games – we knew our qualities and simply didn't think



we'd lose matches."

And Hwang Sun-hong's confidence was merited as Park Ji-ho's title-winning penalty deep into extra-time handed Pohang their first continental championship following a 2-1 victory.

"During that period, we were confident in ourselves and felt no pressure in games – we knew our qualities and simply didn't think we'd lose matches."

**Former Pohang Steelers player and current head coach
Hwang Sun-hong**

A little more than a year later, Hwang Sun-hong and his side were back in the final to face Chinese champions Dalian Wanda and this time the national team forward was fit to start.

Top Left

Pohang Steelers celebrate lifting the 16th Asian Club Championship in 1997.

Bottom Left

Pohang won the Asian Club Championship again in 1998.

Above

With a 2-1 win over Al Ittihad of Saudi Arabia, Pohang Steelers became the first three-time Asian champions after winning the 2009 AFC Champions League.

Although Hong and Bogdanovic were no longer with the side having left for clubs in Japan, a young striker and future national team icon, Lee Dong-gook, had joined Park Tae-ha and Hwang Sun-hong as the stars of the team.

And after a goalless 120 minutes, the tie went to penalties and Hwang Sun-hong converted the first spot-kick for his side en route to a 6-5 victory.

However, the beginning of the new millennium was punctuated by near misses as Pohang finished runner-up in the FA Cup in 2001 and 2002, whilst also missing out on the championship in 2004.

Under Brazilian coach Sergio Farias, though, Pohang did reclaim the K-League title in 2007 and returned to the throne of Asian football with success in the 2009 AFC Champions League as the Steelers

enjoyed a fairy tale campaign and beat Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad 2-1 in the final to claim their Asian crown.

A third place at the FIFA World Club Cup followed in December, but Farias soon departed the club to signal a new era for the Steelers; one with a focus on youth.

"POSCO began a renewed investment in the Pohang academy from the early 2000s as there was a genuine desire to see more players coming through the youth system," said club president Jang Sung-hwan.

"It was decided that while foreign players can help the level of competitiveness of the team, the cost often outweighs the benefit. The initial outlay in terms of scouting, transfer fee and wages for foreign players can be very high, and there is no guarantee they can adapt themselves to the K-League or with the team.

"Results are always important, of course, but developing the players of the future and ensuring the sustainable long-term success of the club through youth development is just as important, if not more so."

With the academy set up over 20 years ago, and now forming part of the Posco



Education Foundation that includes a Middle School, a High School, and Pohang Industrial High School, Pohang's youth set-up is the oldest in Korea, another part of the legacy of Park Tae-joon.

Taking in players from the age of 10-years-old, the residents of the academy are divided into U-12, U-15 and U-18 sides, with 10 coaches overseeing 120 young prospects.

Lee Chang-won, a graduate of the Pohang academy, is the head coach of the youth team and has been since 2011 after his retirement from a playing career in 2009 led to a successful spell as Pohang's reserve team coach.

"With the club's focus on domestic players and youth development, the young players and prospective talents here understand that if they work hard and progress through our youth team, there's a good chance to get into the senior Pohang side directly," said Lee Chang-won.

"There's a lot of history at this club in terms of youth development, so we are able to bring in the best coaches and prospects. As a result many stars have come through the youth

"Results are always important, but developing the players of the future and ensuring the sustainable long-term success of the club is just as important, if not more so."

Pohang Steelers President Jang Sung-hwan

system in recent years such as Lee Myung-joo, Lee Dong-gook, Kim Seung-dae and Shin Hwa-yong."

And under the 39-year-old coach, Pohang's youth sides have enjoyed unprecedented success, having won the K League U-18 Challenge League in consecutive years from 2011 to 2013, while they also claimed the President's Cup for the first time since 1999 in

August.

Moon Chang-jin, 21, and Lee Gwang-hyeok, 19, now members of Pohang's first-team squad, were Lee's first graduates, although 18-year-old striker Hwang Hee-chan, the 2012 AFC U-16 2012 Championship golden boot winner, is tipped to soon follow.

Fed by their productive youth system, and with the legendary Hwang Sun-hong now at the helm, Pohang's senior team have continued to add to their bulging trophy cabinet with the first-ever domestic double in 2013 and now all eyes are on a return to continental glory.

"Pohang has changed a lot in my time with the club. In the past we were focused on star players, but now it's on building a team and developing our youth," said Hwang Sun-hong.

"While the past is important, so is our future. Pohang was the start of my professional career and they gave me so many opportunities and experiences that I'd like to pay them back by making them the top team in Asia once again."



Far left
Kim Seung-dae

Left
The club's \$150 million
clubhouse complex.

Above
2014 AFC Champions League

Top Right
Pohang Steelers President Jang
Sung-hwan

Right
Hwang Hee-chan

Bottom Right
Coach Hwang Sun-hong

Bottom Left
Youth team
head coach Lee Chang-won





COUNTDOWN BEGINS FOR 2015 SHOWDOWN

SEPTEMBER'S ROUND OF FRIENDLY FIXTURES SAW TEAMS START THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR THE AFC ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2015, WHILE A RAFT OF COACHING CHANGES WERE ALSO CONFIRMED AHEAD OF JANUARY'S CONTINENTAL SHOWPIECE.



While the 100 day countdown to the AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 at the beginning of October just after the start of the trophy tour

marked the start of a symbolic run-in to January's showpiece, the 16-teams who will compete for the continental crown had already started their preparations with a series of key friendlies in September.

The trophy tour began in China in September and will head to Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Korea Republic and Japan before finally arriving in Australia at the start of December prior to a 10-day

tour around the host nation ahead of the opening match of the tournament between Australia and Kuwait on January 9 at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium.

By then Socceroos fans will be hoping coach Ange Postecoglou has made enough progress through his regeneration of the national team that the 2015 hosts can build on their 2011 final appearance and subsequent defeat by Japan to challenge for a maiden Asian title on home soil.

And following their encouraging display at the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, despite losing all three group games, Postecoglou's side began to turn their attentions to January next year with friendlies against Belgium and Saudi Arabia in September.

Australia did lose 2-0 to Belgium before ending a five-game losing streak with a 3-2 win over Saudi Arabia in London, but with 25-year-old Chris Herd, 22-year-old Trent Sainsbury (left), 21-year-old Bailey Wright and 20-year-old Brad Smith all making their debuts during the series, and 21-year-old midfielder Massimo Luongo making his first start, Postecoglou continued to show faith in youth ahead of January's tournament.

"We are still in a regeneration phase

with the Asian Cup coming up in January, and that is obviously very important for us," said Postecoglou, who also checked in on the next generation of Socceroos at the AFC U-16 Championship in Thailand in September (above).

"We are using these games to broaden our pool of players as going into the World Cup we had a pretty narrow pool of players to choose from and some of them are developing and that pool is slowly becoming bigger. So we are working really hard to expose some of these players to international matches."

And with Australia facing Kuwait and Oman as well as Korea in the group stage of the AFC Asian Cup, Postecoglou's side will also face Qatar and the UAE in October ahead of a high-profile meeting with reigning Asian champions Japan in November.

"We will use the pool of players for the games in the Middle East in October to introduce some more young players, so by the time we come to the Asian Cup, we'll have increased our pool of players who have experienced international football. We are still at the early stages of regenerating this team with the Asian Cup being our focus. By fast-tracking some of the players we are hoping to create some international

footballers in a short space of time so that we are competitive at the Asian Cup," added Postecoglou, who replaced Holger Osieck as Australia coach last October.

"We have had our last seven or eight games against European or South American opposition so from our perspective leading into the Asian Cup, it makes sense to test ourselves against Asian opposition. We have to make sure the players are exposed to that as the World Cup qualifying process will also start pretty quickly after the Asian Cup. It will be the first time for some of the players to face this type of opposition in those conditions, and hopefully we can develop some future internationals as quickly as possible.

"The Japan game will be tough, but playing the UAE and Qatar will also be tough. And for a lot of the players it will be the first time playing in the Middle East, and also Japan away will be a tough one.

"But since I took over all our games have been tough and we need that to expose the players to this level. And for the Japan game, the squad will closely reflect the one that we will have in January, so it will be a good indicator of where we are."

With Australia certainly in the middle of a process of change under Postecoglou,



defending champions Japan as well as 2011 third-place finishers Korea are guaranteed to have at least one change in January after both underwent coaching

changes following the FIFA World Cup.

And under new Mexican coach Javier Aguirre, who replaced Alberto Zaccheroni, Japan lost 2-0 to Uruguay before sharing a 2-2 draw with Venezuela.

Facing the same opposition with new German coach Uli Stielike watching from the stands after replacing Hong Myung-bo, Korea lost 1-0 to Uruguay before recording a 3-1 win over Venezuela.

Stielike will take charge of his first match at the start of October as Korea face Paraguay with the Taeguk Warriors looking to build on reaching the semi-finals at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup.

Having lost a thrilling semi-final to Japan in Qatar, Korea eventually claimed third place after beating Uzbekistan in the third place play-off.

The Central Asians have also undergone their own coaching change, although it only saw Mirdjalal Kasimov step down from his dual role as the coach of domestic side Bunyodkor to solely focus on preparing the team for January's tournament.

And those preparations made an



AFC ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2015

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UNITE FOR THE ASIAN CUP

AUSTRALIA 2015





encouraging start as Uzbekistan beat both Jordan, who they lost to in the 2014 FIFA World Cup play-off, and New Zealand in September ahead of meetings with Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE in October.

During the 3-1 defeat by Uzbekistan in Tashkent, New Zealand were coached by Englishman Anthony Hudson following his departure from Bahrain, who quickly moved to appoint former Jordan coach Adnan Hamad (right) as his replacement.

For Bahrain, as well as hosts Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Iraq and Kuwait, a large bulk of their preparations for Australia 2015 will take place at November's Gulf Cup in Riyadh.

And defending Gulf Cup champions the UAE were one of the most active sides following draws with Norway, Lithuania and Paraguay.

Oman, meanwhile, lost to both the Republic of Ireland and Kosovo, while Qatar shared a goalless draw with Morocco before losing 2-0 to Peru.

Peru also recorded a 2-0 win over Iraq, while Kuwait lost to China and Bahrain.

The 3-1 win for China along with a 1-1 draw against Jordan marked an encouraging start to their preparations under Frenchman Alain Perrin, who was appointed in February and oversaw China's dramatic qualification on the final Matchday in March.

China also shared a 1-1 draw with Jordan who had earlier lost to Uzbekistan, although new coach Ray Wilkins will only take charge

of the side from the Hashemite Kingdom following October's friendly with Malaysia having taken over from Egyptian Hossam Hassan.

Former England midfielder Wilkins most recently worked as assistant coach at Fulham and will be assisted by former Arsenal and Republic of Ireland forward Frank Stapleton.

Iran were not in friendly action during the international break following their encouraging display at the FIFA World Cup under Carlos Queiroz, who is set to remain in charge of Team Melli after signing a four-year extension in September.

Palestine, though, are certain to have a new coach at the helm in Australia after AFC Challenge Cup-winning coach Jamal Mahmoud resigned following September's Peace Cup in the Philippines.

Mahmoud had helped Palestine qualify for a first AFC Asian Cup after beating the Philippines 1-0 in the final of May's AFC Challenge Cup, but after claiming third place at the Peace Cup following a 7-3 extra-time victory against Chinese Taipei, he decided to step down to be replaced by assistant Saeb Jendeya.

Having also lost 4-1 to Myanmar at the Peace Cup, Palestine are set to face two matches against India in October followed by a clash with Morocco ahead of a meeting with China in December.

Meanwhile, five teams, Bahrain, China, Qatar, the UAE and Jordan have also

confirmed the venues for their pre-competition camps.

Bahrain, who arrive in Australia on December 22, are to be based in Victoria's Ballarat, utilising the Ballarat Regional Soccer Facility until January 7.

China will prepare at Campbelltown in Sydney's west and will step-up their preparations at Campbelltown Sports Stadium, while Qatar will be hosted by the capital city of Canberra where they will have access to the facilities at the Australian Institute of Sport.

And finally, Jordan will hold a 15-day camp at Mazenod College in Monash City in Melbourne.

"I am delighted to see Mazenod has been chosen by Jordan for their Asian Cup pre-competition camp," said AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 Local Organising Committee CEO Michael Brown.

"The hard work of everyone at the College, combined with the full support of the Victorian Government, has paid off.

"The Local Organising Committee identified pre-competition camps as an important opportunity for Australian communities, and this announcement highlights how a strong community can take centre stage in the lead up to our event."

The UAE, meanwhile, will make the Royal Pines on the Gold Coast their AFC Asian Cup headquarters from December 23, becoming the first team to base themselves in Queensland.

AFC ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2015 - FIXTURES

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Quarter-Finals
Australia Korea Republic Oman Kuwait	Uzbekistan Saudi Arabia China DPR Korea	Iran UAE Qatar Bahrain	Japan Jordan Iraq Palestine	22/01/15 Winner A v Runner-Up B (Melbourne) Winner B v Runner-Up A (Brisbane) 23/01/15 Winner C v Runner-Up D (Canberra) Winner D v Runner-Up C (Sydney)
09/01/15 Australia v Kuwait (Melbourne) 10/01/15 Korea Republic v Oman (Canberra) 13/01/15 Kuwait v Korea Republic (Canberra) Oman v Australia (Sydney) 17/01/15 Australia v Korea Republic (Brisbane) Oman v Kuwait (Newcastle)	10/01/15 Uzbekistan v DPR Korea (Sydney) Saudi Arabia v China (Brisbane) 14/01/15 DPR Korea v Saudi Arabia (Melbourne) China v Uzbekistan (Brisbane) 18/01/15 Uzbekistan v Saudi Arabia (Melbourne) China v DPR Korea (Canberra)	11/01/15 Iran v Bahrain (Melbourne) UAE v Qatar (Canberra) 15/01/15 Bahrain v UAE (Canberra) Qatar v Iran (Sydney) 19/01/15 Iran v UAE (Brisbane) Qatar v Bahrain (Sydney)	12/01/15 Japan v Palestine (Newcastle) Jordan v Iraq (Brisbane) 16/01/15 Palestine v Jordan (Melbourne) Iraq v Japan (Brisbane) 20/01/15 Japan v Jordan (Melbourne) Iraq v Palestine (Canberra)	Semi-Finals 26/01/15 Winner QF1 v Winner QF3 (Sydney) 27/01/15 Winner QF2 v Winner QF4 (Newcastle) Third Place Play-Off 30/01/15 Loser SF1 v Loser SF2 (Newcastle) Final 31/01/15 Winner SF1 v Winner SF2 (Sydney)

TIME TO TAKE CONTROL

THE LAUNCH OF PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2015 IN NOVEMBER WILL AGAIN INCLUDE TEAMS AND PLAYERS FROM THE AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE, WITH UPDATED GAMEPLAY FURTHER ENHANCING THE EXPERIENCE FOR FOOTBALL FANS ACROSS ASIA.



“The pitch is ours’ is the ethos that dominates Pro Evolution Soccer 2015, and with its exclusive use of the AFC Champions League, that could be anywhere from Sydney and Seoul or Riyadh and Doha. Released on November, 13th, PES 2015 maintains the exclusive licences of the top club competitions across the world, which includes the UEFA Champions League, Copa Libertadores as well as the AFC Champions League.

Updated for the new season with the latest teams and players, this prestigious competition has been accurately recreated with unique presentational elements. From the stadium, to local crowd visuals and banners, Konami’s development team have sought to replicate the look and feel to put you right into the action.



In fact, localisation has been a key focal point of bringing this unique license to life.

Using feedback from communities, character and commentary has been re-worked to be as faithful to real life as possible, with beIN Sports senior commentator Raouf Khlif returning to talk users through the action as it plays out.

“The AFC Champions League is not only an important licence for the PES series, it’s one of the most important tournaments in world football,” said European President Shinji Hirano.

“Therefore, it’s important for us as a company to stay committed to offer the rapidly growing market in the Middle East and Asia a stellar product.

“We’ve always made sure to keep our ear to the ground and listen to what the football fans want, it’s very important to keep doing that.”

Through the combined efforts of the Tokyo and Windsor-based PES Productions team, the aim has been to recreate the drama and tension associated with a vital match.

PES 2015 marks a concerted return to

core PES values of total control, utterly responsive controls and unrestricted gameplay, where the user has complete control over how they play.

Every pass, shot or run is finely balanced to give maximum player satisfaction within PES 2015’s on-field action.

By looking at key facets of modern football, the PES Productions Team has completely re-worked how the game performs key sections. The shooting and goalkeeping mechanics benefit from a new system that allows precise aim and control over a shot’s power and also unlimited shooting styles. Similarly, the goalkeepers intuitively close angles and are capable of an amazing number of ways to react to any situation. General passing and the final ball to the front line has also been expanded, allowing for a wide variety of options from little knock-ons to powerful passes that use new physics routines to ensure that the ball behaves with exceptional realism. Close control also steps up a gear, with the player governing both the positioning of a player, but with greater options of how to dribble into space or beat your marker.

KEY FEATURES

Incredible Response Times:

Lightning fast controls allows users to instinctively react to every movement when the ball is in play.

On The Ball Abilities:

Take on defenders using each player’s bespoke dribbling skills, as opposed to relying on ‘trick’ moves. New skills include close control, responsive sprint and incorporate a much wider range of pace - from walking to sprinting.

Case for Defence:

Users have complete control over when to close down, tackle, or hold up play. Successful defending is based entirely on the decisions the user makes.

myClub:

Demanded by fans of the series, an extensive Master League Online overhaul allows players and managers to be added using accumulated points or via micro-transactions within club dealings. Agents are now used to meet player requirement criteria, while unhappy players can upset the balance of a side to detrimental effect. Team spirit plays a key role, as does compatibility of manager and player as well as player’s compatibility with other team-mates creates better teamwork impacting the on field performances.

Live Updates:

Weekly updates will constantly update transfers and team line-ups across the English, French, Italian, Spanish and Brazilian leagues. Player data is also updated based on current performances every week, so if a player is on a goal-scoring streak, his stats will be boosted accordingly in the update. Applied to online modes and optional within single-player mode.

Role Control:

Role Control allows three players to divide the defensive, midfield and attacking roles between them for more structured multi-player action. This new mode means players govern their selected area and adds a new co-operative slant to the game.





Western Sydney End Guangzhou's Reign

Anthony Golec and Tomi Juric scored as Australian debutants Western Sydney Wanderers ended the continental reign of China's Guangzhou Evergrande after winning their quarter-final tie on away goals following a 2-2 draw on aggregate.

Golec, who made his first-team debut for Western Sydney against Chinese Super League side Guizhou Renhe on March 12, scored the only goal in the second half of the first leg at Parramatta Stadium.

And despite Guangzhou winning the return fixture 2-1 thanks to a stoppage time strike from Brazilian Elkeson, Juric's second half penalty at Tianhe Sports Center saw Western Sydney set-up a semi-final meeting with 2013 finalists FC Seoul.

"I feel very good and proud of my team. They have done a great job by showing resilience and fighting spirit," said Western Sydney coach Tony Popovic who has also led his side to back-to-back A-League Grand Final appearances and the 2013 A-League Premiership in their first two years of existence.

"This was a very tough match for us. We travelled a long way to be here and we are exhausted. But we overcame all the difficulties and I am very proud."

FC Seoul, meanwhile, edged out fellow K-League Classic side Pohang Steelers 3-0 on penalties following a goalless draw on aggregate and the 2013 finalists will entertain Western Sydney at Seoul World Cup Stadium on September 17 before travelling to Australia two weeks later for the second leg.

In the second leg at Seoul World Cup Stadium following a goalless draw a week earlier in Pohang, FC Seoul goalkeeper Yu Sang-hun saved from visiting captain Hwang Ji-soo, Kim Jae-sung and Park Hee-chul in the shootout as the 2013 finalists secured a second consecutive appearance in the semi-finals.

"This is my best experience as a coach. Our eagerness helped us win and we will keep playing our way in the future," said FC Seoul coach Choi Yong-soo who saw his side lose last year's final to Guangzhou on away goals following a 3-3 draw on aggregate.



"After 70 minutes I felt Pohang were thinking about extra-time and penalties so we tried to score, but overall what is important is the result. I told the players before the penalties to believe in themselves because we had a good preparation."

In the West, Al Ain advanced to the semi-finals for the first time in nine years after completing a comprehensive 5-1 aggregate

victory over two-time winners Al Ittihad from Saudi Arabia, while Al Hilal advanced to the last four after edging out Al Sadd 1-0 on aggregate.

Tournament-leading scorer Asamoah Gyan, Omar Abdulrahman and substitute Ibrahim Diaky found the net as inaugural AFC Champions League winners Al

Ain advanced to the semi-finals following a 3-1 second leg success over Al Ittihad.

A 35th minute own goal from Ismail Ahmed had given Al Ittihad hope of overturning a 2-0 deficit from the first leg, but after Gyan netted

his 12th goal of the campaign before half-time, Abdulrahman and Diaky sealed the win in the second half.

"We achieved what we wanted early in the match as this made things easier for the players and they were released from pressure and they showed a good performance. We are happy that we managed to repeat our victory and to advance to the semi-finals," said Al Ain coach Zlatko Dalic.

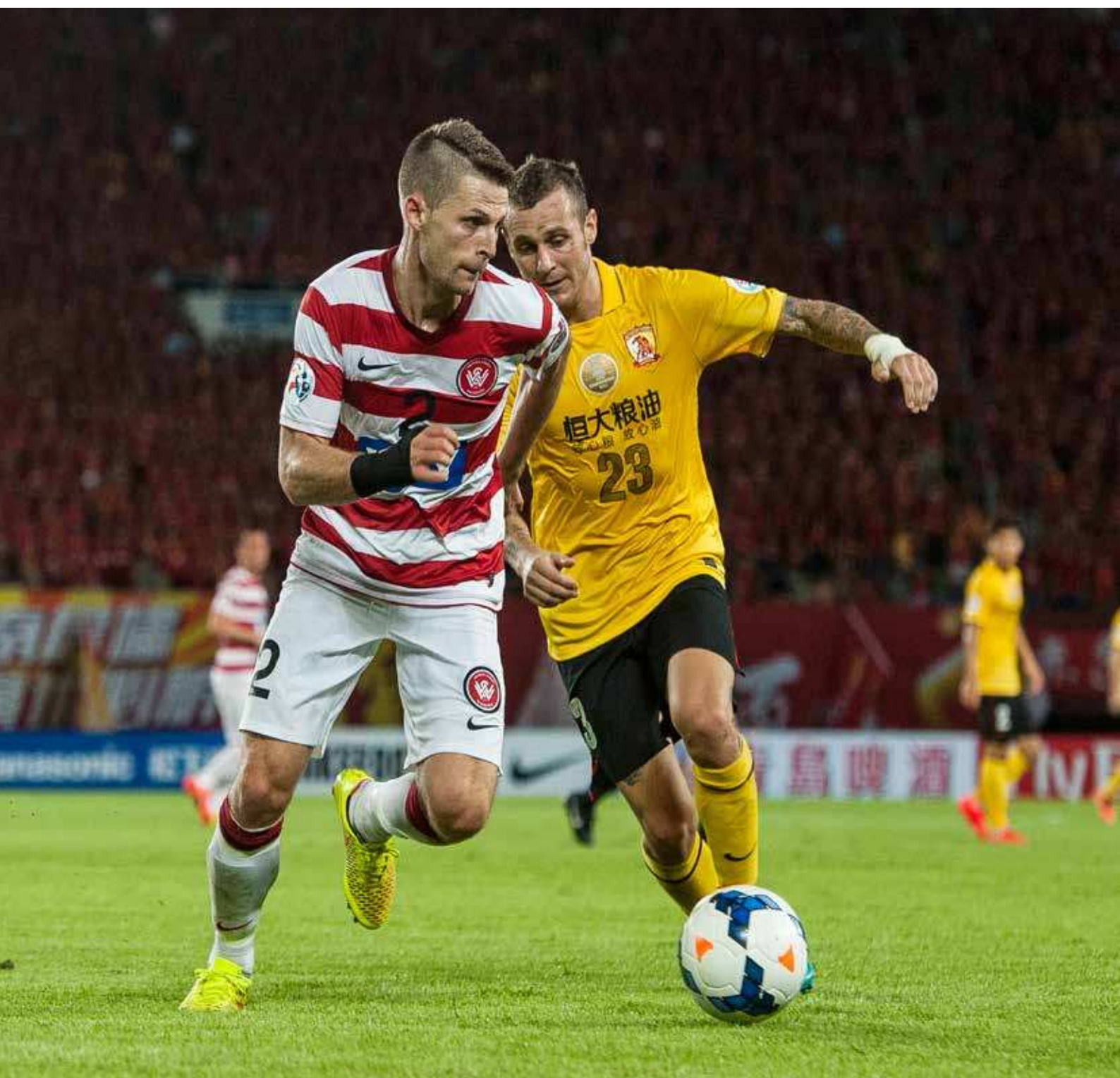
"We will turn our attention to Al Hilal now and I know them well as I have previously coached them and I know their weaknesses and strengths. The best team will reach the final and I hope that we can make it."

Dalic's former charges Al Hilal advanced to the semi-finals after a goalless draw with Al Sadd in the second leg in Doha secured a 1-0 aggregate victory.

With Salman Al Faraj's first leg strike proving the difference between the two sides, two-time Asian Club Championship winners Al Hilal advanced to the semi-finals for the first time since 2010.

Al Hilal will entertain 2003 AFC Champions League winners Al Ain in the first leg at King Fahd International Stadium on September 16 ahead of the return fixture two weeks later.





QUARTER-FINALS



Al Sadd v Al Hilal

19/08/14

Al Hilal 1 (Salman Al Faraj 71) Al Sadd 0

26/08/14

Al Sadd 0 Al Hilal 0



Al Hilal

win 1-0 on aggregate



Al Ittihad v Al Ain

19/08/14

Al Ain 2 (Ismail Ahmed 48, Asamoah Gyan 61) Al Ittihad 0

26/08/14

Al Ittihad 1 (Ismail Ahmed 35 OG) Al Ain 3 (Asamoah Gyan 40, Omar Abdulrahman 66, Ibrahim Diaky 84)



Al Ain

win 5-1 on aggregate



Guangzhou Evergrande v Western Sydney Wanderers

20/08/14

Western Sydney 1 (Antony Golec 60) Guangzhou 0

27/08/14

Guangzhou 2 (Alessandro Diamanti 61, Elkeson 90+1) Western Sydney 1 (Tomi Juric 58)



Western Sydney Wanderers

win on away
goals after 2-2 draw on aggregate



FC Seoul v Pohang Steelers

20/08/14

Pohang Steelers 0 FC Seoul 0

27/08/14

FC Seoul 0 Pohang Steelers 0



FC Seoul

win 3-0 on penalties
following a 0-0 draw on aggregate



Jayapura Claim Historic Semi-Final Berth

Persipura Jayapura became the first Indonesian side to reach the AFC Cup semi-finals after recording an eye-catching 8-4 aggregate victory over defending champions Kuwait Sports Club in August's quarter-finals.

Two-time winners Kuwait SC had taken a 3-2 first leg lead after substitute Ali Al Kandari scored twice in the final six minutes at Kuwait SC Stadium.

But a hat-trick by Argentinian forward Robertino Pugliara and a goal each by captain Boaz Solossa, Titus Bonai and substitute Ferinando Pahabol in the second leg at Mandala Stadium saw the Indonesia champions post a sensational 6-1 victory to join former runners-up Qadsia SC from Kuwait, Arbil from Iraq, and Hong Kong's Kitchee in the semi-finals.

"I think that our players showed all of their best ability in the game and they were able to produce a big win," said Jayapura coach Jacksen Tiago following the second leg.

"We travelled abroad and we welcomed our visitors with a classy ball game which produced an amazing result. The Persipura players had an extraordinary game and for this result, I must thank everyone – the management, players, coaches and the people of Papua.

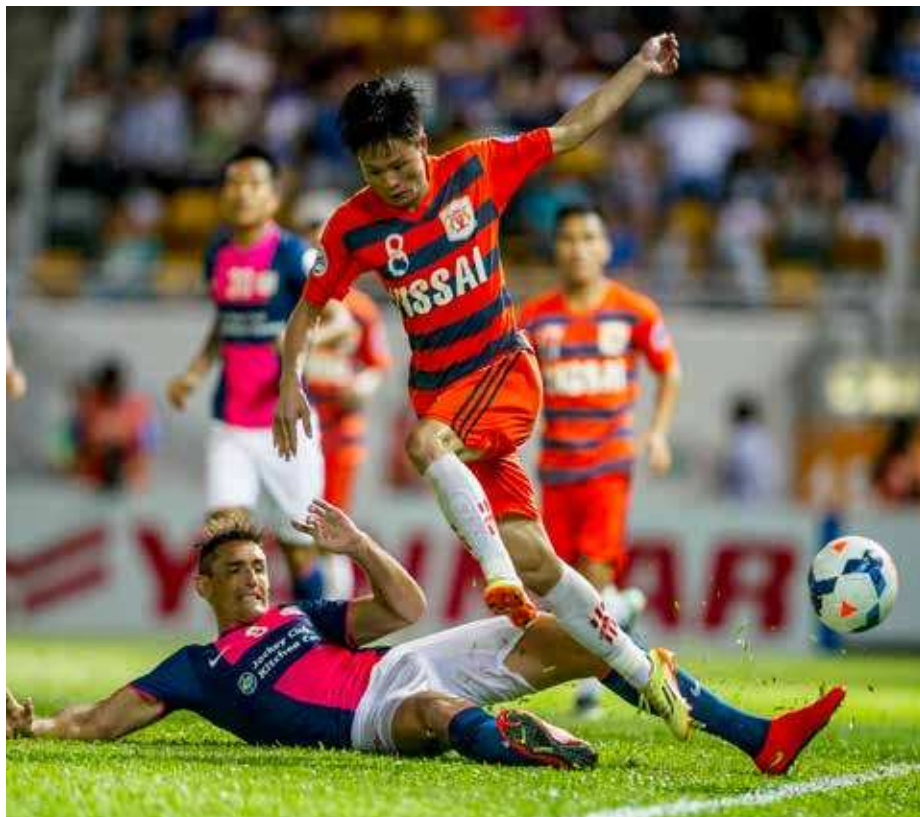
"It was an excellent result but we are not surprised because we know the potential of the Persipura players."

And Jayapura will face Qadsia SC for a place in the final after the 2013 finalists edged out Bahrain's Al Hidd on away goals following a 3-3 draw on aggregate.

Bader Al Mutawa, who was the tournament MVP last year as Qadsia SC lost the final to domestic rivals Kuwait SC, opened the scoring in the first leg in Kuwait City only for Nawaf Al Khaldi to level the scores early in the second half.

In the second leg in Manama, goals either side of half-time by Orok Akarandut and Ahmed Al Khattal had given tournament debutants Al Hidd the lead at the National Stadium.

But after Danijel Subotic pulled a goal back from the penalty spot midway through the second half, Mohammad Al Daoud



inadvertently turned Hamad Aman's cross into his own net in the 89th minute to send Qadsia SC through to the semi-finals for the third time in five seasons.

"We had a good performance and we achieved our target which is to advance to the semi-finals," said Qadsia SC coach Antonio Puche after the second leg.

"We managed to make a good comeback although Al Hidd defended well after taking the lead."

On the opposite side of the draw, 2012 runners-up Arbil recorded a 3-1 aggregate success over Hanoi T&T, while Hong Kong champions Kitchee edged out Ninh Binh 4-3 on aggregate.

Amjed Radhi

scored the only goal just before half-time in the first leg in Hanoi as Arbil claimed a 1-0 win before the striker and Halkor Mulla Mohammad were on target in the second half of the return fixture as the Iraqi side comfortably progressed

to the semi-finals.

Kitchee, meanwhile, became the first Hong Kong side to qualify for the semi-finals of the AFC Cup in five years after winning the first leg of their quarter-final tie with Vietnam's XM Vissai Ninh Binh 4-2 thanks to two goals from Spanish striker Juan Belencoso.

And despite losing the second leg 1-0 in Hong Kong after Nigerian striker Suleiman Oladoja scored the only goal midway through the first half of a sweltering quarter-final second leg, Kitchee followed in the footsteps of 2009 semi-finalists South China.

"I'm happy because we're in the semi-finals, but in the first half we didn't play very well," said Kitchee's Spanish coach Jose Molina after the second leg.

"In the second half we played better and had our chances too. They played well in the whole of the game and the first half was the difference for us."

Kitchee, though, will hope to go one step further after South China lost 3-1 on aggregate to Kuwait SC.

"The team is very happy that we got into the semi-finals," said Kitchee captain Lo Kwan Yee.





QUARTER-FINALS



**Kitchee v
XM Vissai Ninh Binh**



19/08/14

XM Vissai Ninh Binh 2 (Suleiman Oladoja 56,
Le Van Thang 75) Kitchee 4 (Juan Belencoso 29, 90+3,
Ngan Lok Fung 49, Xu Deshuai 73)

26/08/14

Kitchee 0 XM Vissai Ninh Binh 1 (Suleiman Oladoja 28)



Kitchee

win 4-3 on aggregate



Arbil v Hanoi T&T



19/08/14

Hanoi T&T 0 Arbil 1 (Amjed Radhi 44)

26/08/14

Arbil 2 (Amjed Radhi 57, Haikor Mulla
Mohammad 88) Hanoi T&T 0



Arbil

win 3-0 on aggregate



Al Hidd v Qadsia SC



19/08/14

Qadsia SC 1 (Bader Al Mutawa 5)
Al Hidd 1 (Nawaf Al Khaldi 47)

26/08/14

Al Hidd 2 (Orok Akarandut 25, Ahmed
Al Khattal 57) Qadsia SC 2 (Danjel Subotic 68,
Mohammad Al Daoud 89)



Qadsia SC

win on away goals after 3-3 draw on aggregate



**Persipura Jayapura v
Kuwait SC**



19/08/14

Kuwait SC 3 (Chadi Hammami 4, Ali Al Kandari 84, 87)
Persipura Jayapura 2 (Im Jun-sik 13, Gerald Pangkali 23)

26/08/14

Persipura Jayapura 6 (Robertino Pugliara 2, 45+3,
66, Boaz Solossa 44, Titus Bonai 52, Ferinando
Pahabol 90+3) Kuwait SC 1 (Ali Al Kandari 65)



Persipura Jayapura

win 8-4 on aggregate



AFC President's Cup Success For FC HTTU

Akmyrat Jumanazarov and Suleyman Muhadov were on target either side of half-time as Turkmenistan's FC HTTU won the last-ever edition of the AFC President's Cup after recording a 2-1 victory over Rimyongsu Club of DPR Korea in September's final in Colombo.

Jumanazarov headed home the opener eight minutes before the interval following a well-worked corner routine between Gurbangeldi Batyrov and David Sarkisov.

And with Azat Shamyradov crossing for Muhadov to double the lead after half-time with Rimyongsu pushing forward for an equaliser, Ri Kwang-hyok's 87th minute response was not enough to deny 2010 semi-finalists FC HTTU following in the footsteps of 2013 champions Balkan FT to keep the trophy

in Turkmenistan hands.

"I am so proud of my team, we have a great bond together and this showed in the final. I call them my friends, my brothers; not my players," said FC HTTU coach Rowshen Meredov.

"They were highly motivated for the final and they wanted to show how they can really play.

"There was no choice for us other than to win this cup; this was our main aim from the very start of the year."

The win ensured FC HTTU completed a 100% record after Meredov's side had topped Group A following victories over Nepal's Manang Marshyangdi Club and hosts Sri Lanka Air Force SC.

After Manang had opened with a 2-1 comeback win over Sri Lanka Air Force, Muhadov scored a hat-trick as FC HTTU beat the Nepalese side 3-1 as the striker

scored twice inside the final 20 minutes.

Hosts Sri Lanka Air Force also took the lead against FC HTTU in the final Group A outing, but with Muhadov netting a quickfire double inside the last 10 minutes, FC HTTU finished three points clear of Manang at the top of the table.

Rimyongsu also posted a perfect record in the group stages as they coasted to a 5-0 win over Mongolia's FC Erchim in their Group B opener before recording a similarly emphatic 4-0 victory over Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra Limited from Bangladesh.

Ri Jin-hyok scored twice while Ri Hyok, Ri Kwang-hyok and Pak Song-chol were also on target as Rimyongsu opened their campaign in style with victory over Erchim,

And Ri Jin-hyok as well as captain Pak, Ro Hak-su and Kim Kyong-il scored as Rimyongsu booked their place in the final following a comfortable 4-0 win over Sheikh



Russel.

Sheikh Russel did finish second in Group B having recorded a 1-0 win over Erchim in the tournament's opening game.

But despite Ri's late goal in the final, Rimyongsu fell short of a third win of the campaign having been the first club from DPR Korea to qualify for the AFC President's Cup finals.

"I think the difference between the group stage games and the final was that in the first two games our players were more confident," said Rimyongsu coach Jo Tong-sop.

"But in the final, they were quite nervous, so we couldn't display our best performance.

"I made a mistake in the psychological preparation of the players. They have to be both psychologically and physically prepared for big matches, only when they have both the physical and psychological elements truly ready can they apply themselves properly to an important match."

FC HTTU's Turkmenistan forward Muhadov, meanwhile, won both the Abdullah Al Dabal MVP and Top Goalscorer awards after scoring six goals in three games.

"I am always competing with my father and he often jokes with me saying that I'll never be better than him," said the 20-year-old son of former Turkmenistan forward Charyar

Muhadov.

"But now I have all these trophies to show him. It was my objective to be top scorer in the tournament, but I didn't expect to earn the MVP award too. It's really like a dream come true for me.

"Although the group stages were difficult, we all spoke together before the final and agreed that if we continued to play like that we wouldn't win the cup. So we had good motivation from the very first minute, worked hard and took care of the result."

Muhadov had been a fitness doubt before the final having scored all five of FC HTTU's goals in the group stage, which included a hat-trick in the 3-1 win over Nepal's Manang.

"Yes, Muhadov was a fitness concern ahead of the final and early on in the match he actually pulled up with a problem, too, and I was seriously considering substituting him in the first half," said FC HTTU coach Meredov.

"But I believed in him, he's a special player, so I kept him on the field and he scored a goal – just as he has in every stage of this competition.

"He's still young and if he keeps working hard I truly believe he will end up in one of the top leagues of Asia."

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
FC HTTU (TKM)	2	2	0	0	5	2	3	6
Manang Marshyangdi Club (NEP)	2	1	0	1	3	4	-1	3
Sri Lanka Air Force SC (SRI)	2	0	0	2	2	4	-2	0

20/09/14
Manang Marshyangdi Club 2 (Shiva Shrestha 35, Anil Gurung 64)
Sri Lanka Air Force SC 1 (Kavindu Ishan 6)
22/09/14
FC HTTU 3 (Suleyman Muhadov 28,73, 83) Manang Marshyangdi Club 1 (Sujal Shrestha 35)
24/09/14
Sri Lanka Air Force SC 1 (Kavindu Ishan 21) FC HTTU 2 (Suleyman Muhadov 83, 86)

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Rimyongsu Club (PRK)	2	2	0	0	9	0	9	6
Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra (BAN)	2	1	0	1	4	-3	3	3
FC Erchim (MNG)	2	0	0	2	0	6	-6	0

20/09/14
FC Erchim 0 Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra 1 (Kingsley Chigozie 65)
22/09/14
Rimyongsu 5 (Ri Jin-hyok 20, 65, Ri Hyok 22, Ri Kwang-hyok 24, Pak Song-chol 57) FC Erchim 0
24/09/14
Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra 0 Rimyongsu 4 (Ri Jin-hyok 31, Pak Song-chol 45+4, Ro Hak-so 51, Kim Kyong-il 60)

Final

26/09/14
Rimyongsu 1 (Ri Kwang-hyok 87) FC HTTU 2 (Akmyrat Jumanazarov 37, Suleyman Muhadov 55)





DPR Korea Battle Back To Secure U-16 Title

Han Kwang-song and Choe Song-hyok scored in the second half as DPR Korea claimed a second AFC U-16 Championship title after completing a 2-1 comeback victory over Korea Republic in Saturday's final at Rajamangala Stadium.

Choi Jae-young's 34th minute header had given Korea Republic the lead as Choi Jin-cheul's side sought to claim a tournament-leading third AFC U-16 Championship title having advanced to the final with a 100% record.

But after Han equalised for 2010 champions DPR Korea five minutes after half-time, Choe struck with 23 minutes remaining as Yon Kwang-mu's side joined Korea Republic, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia and Oman as two-time winners of the tournament.

"For our young players, this championship is their debut in international matches and our young players played well in the group stage and learned a lot in the quarter-finals, semi-finals and also the final," said DPR Korea

coach Yon Kwang-mu.

"Their skill and technique and their determination has developed, and in the future through this experience at this championship, we will consolidate what they have learned."

DPR Korea finished runners-up in Group C behind Uzbekistan having lost to the defending champions either side of wins over Kuwait and Nepal.

But after edging out Iran following a penalty shootout in their quarter-final following a goalless draw to secure qualification for the 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup in Chile, DPR Korea also needed penalties to beat Australia in the semi-final following 1-1 draw.

"We will play at the World Cup and represent Asia," added former DPR Korea international Yon.

"We will prepare well and show Asia's development at the World Cup."

Korea Republic, meanwhile, had qualified for the final with a 100% record after topping Group A ahead of Malaysia, hosts Thailand and Oman.

Choi Jin-cheul's side then downed Japan 2-0 in the quarter-finals thanks to two goals

from Barcelona striker Lee-seung-woo before Korea Republic brushed aside Syria 7-1 in their semi-final.

But despite Lee being named tournament MVP and top scorer after netting five goals in five games, Korea Republic missed out on adding to their 1986 and 2002 triumphs after suffering a first and only defeat of the campaign in the final.

"I am pretty disappointed by this result as the purpose of this tournament was to be champion, so these young players are hurt after this loss," said former Korea Republic international Choi, who played at the FIFA World Cup in 2002 and 2006.

"I am disappointed with the result, but the players did well and I am satisfied with how they played. It is also good for the development.

"I think the DPR Korea team were very quick and we gave them too much space in defence and the midfield and that is why we lost."

Despite their semi-final defeats, Australia and Syria will also represent Asia at the 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup in Chile.





Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Korea Republic	3	3	0	0	6	1	5	9
Malaysia	3	2	0	1	3	2	1	6
Thailand	3	1	0	2	1	3	-2	3
Oman	3	0	0	3	2	6	-4	0

06/09/14

Thailand 0 Malaysia 1 (Muhammad Hafizuddin 34)
Korea Republic 3 (Kim Jung-min 22, Yu Seung-min 86, You Juan 90) Oman 1 (Dakhil Al Yahmadi 31)

08/09/14

Malaysia 0 Korea Republic 1 (Lee Seung-woo 15)
Oman 0 Thailand 1 (Samart Authairatsamee 60)

10/09/14

Thailand 0 Korea Republic 2 (Lee Seung-woo 45+1, Hwang Tae-hyeon 62)
Oman 1 (Mohammed Al Ubaidani 68) Malaysia 2 (Muhammad Najmuddin 64, 77)

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Australia	3	3	0	0	9	2	7	9
Japan	3	2	0	1	7	4	3	6
China	3	1	0	2	2	6	-4	3
Hong Kong	3	0	0	3	0	6	-6	0

06/09/14

Japan 2 (Ritsu Doan 53, Daiki Suga 73) Hong Kong 0
Australia 3 (Jackson Bandiera 16, Cameron Joice 60, Kosta Petratos 72) China 0

08/09/14

Hong Kong 0 Australia 2 (Charlie Devereux 28, Jamal Reiners 86)
China 0 Japan 3 (Daiki Suga 48, Toshiaki Onozawa 54, Ryosuke Nagasawa 56)

10/09/14

Japan 2 (Takumi Sasaki 27, Takuya Yasui 69) Australia 4 (Jake Brimmer 15, 59, Cameron Joice 25, 81)
China 2 (He Xin 26, Duan Liuyu 66) Hong Kong 0

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Uzbekistan	3	2	1	0	8	5	3	7
DPR Korea	3	2	0	1	9	4	5	6
Nepal	3	1	1	1	4	6	-2	4
Kuwait	3	0	0	3	3	9	-6	0

07/09/14

Uzbekistan 1 (Jonibek Kuchimov 54) Nepal 1 (Kiran Sunar 90+4)

Kuwait 0 DPR Korea 3 (Han Kwang-song 5, Jong Chang-bom 73, Choe Song-hyok 83)

09/09/14

Nepal 2 (Shabaib Al Khaldi 2 OG, Bimal Gharti Magar 82) Kuwait 1 (Salem Al Bariki 75)

DPR Korea 2 (Han Kwang-song 17, Jong Chang-bom 60) Uzbekistan 3 (Sukhrob Nurulloev 40, 59, Abuugani

Ganijonov 45+2)

11/09/14

Uzbekistan 4 (Savely Abramov 9, Jonibek Kuchimov 43, Sukhrob Nurulloev 68, Khudoberdi Kholikov 90+4) Kuwait 2 (Abdulaziz Al Hadiyah 45, Khaled Mohammad 45+2)

DPR Korea 4 (Ju Hyon-hyok 4, Choe Song-hyok 23, 45, Han Kwang-song 27) Nepal 1 (Ananta Tamang 26)

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Iran	3	2	0	1	6	5	1	6
Syria	3	1	2	0	3	2	1	5
Qatar	3	0	2	1	4	5	-1	2
Saudi Arabia	3	0	2	1	2	3	-1	2

07/09/14

Iran 3 (Reza Karimi 22, Reza Shekari 48, 61) Qatar 2 (Hassan Ahmad 4, 59)

Syria 0 Saudi Arabia 0

09/09/14

Qatar 1 (Khalid Mazed 60) Syria 1 (Anas Aji 21)

Saudi Arabia 1 (Mashhour Abdullah 41) Iran 2

(Mohammad Shamsi 64, Reza Karimi 65)

11/09/14

Iran 1 (Mohammad Soltanimehr 45+2) Syria 2

(Mohammad Jaddoua 26, Naeim Naem 40)

Saudi Arabia 1 (Khalid Dubaysh 86) Qatar 1 (Hassan Ahmad 90+4)

Quarter-Finals

14/09/14

Korea Republic 2 (Lee Seung-woo 42, 47) Japan 0

Australia 2 (Cameron Joice 36, Daniel Maskin 76)

Malaysia 1 (Kogileswaran Raj 31)

Uzbekistan 2 (Shokhrukh Mahmudxoijiyev 62, 87)

Syria 5 (Abdullah Barakat 16, 30, 48, Mohammad

Jaddoua 52, Anas Aji 55)

Iran 0 DPR Korea 0

DPR Korea win 4-2 on penalties

Semi-Finals

17/09/14

Korea Republic 7 (Jang Gyeol-hee 5, 49, Lee Seung-woo 47, Jang Jae-won 53, Park Sang-hyeok 57, Park Sang-hyeok 60, Lee Sang-min 63) Syria 1 (Anas Aji 62)

Australia 1 (Daniel Arzani 85) DPR Korea 1 (Park Yong-gwan 46)

DPR Korea win 4-1 on penalties

Final

20/09/14

Korea Republic 1 (Choi Jae-young 34) DPR Korea 2

(Han Kwang-song 50, Choe Song-hyok 67)



Nagoya Claim Futsal Title In Dramatic Fashion

Wataru Kitahara's dramatic winner in the last minute of extra-time saw Japan's Nagoya Oceans become the first-ever two-time winners of the AFC Futsal Club Championship after a 5-4 victory over defending champions Chonburi Bluewave of Thailand in August's final in Chengdu.

With penalties looming, Kitahara was the hero for Nagoya as he ghosted in at the back post as the 2011 champions emphatically crowned their return to the final after consecutive third-place finishes in 2012 and 2013.

Goals from Jirawat Sornwichian and Rudimar Venancio had sandwiched Kitahara's first of the night as Chonburi took a 2-1 lead at half-time.

But after Hidekazu Shirakata and Kaoru Morioko turned the tie in favour of Nagoya, Sarawut Jaipetch twice pulled the Thai side level to force to tie into extra-time following a 4-4 draw.

Morioko had seemingly secured the title for Nagoya after netting his second of the night and his sides fourth, but with the clock ticking down, Chonburi went to the powerplay and it paid off in the most dramatic fashion as Venancio's pass was rammed home by Sarawut with just 30 seconds remaining to take the game to extra-time.

Nagoya, though, eventually prevailed as

Morioko found Tomoaki Watanabe, and his ball from left to right was turned in by Kitahara at the back post deep into extra time to hand Nagoya a historic victory and end Chonburi's dreams of back-to-back titles.

"My players were incredible. We have only a small squad in terms of depth, but each of them had faith we could achieve this victory right up until the very end," said Nagoya coach Victor Acosta.



"They fought like lions and kept fighting until the title was ours. We are champions again and this is good for Japan and it really shows that we are getting better and better in futsal."

Victory in the final capped an unbeaten campaign for Nagoya who had topped Group A following victories over Australia's Vic Vipers, Lokomotiv Tashkent of Uzbekistan and a draw against home side Shenzhen Nanling

Tielang that saw Acosta's side win the group by virtue of superior goal difference.

Kitahara then netted a brace as Nagoya cruised to a 6-2 win over Iran's Dabiri Tabriz in the semi-finals to book their meeting against 2013 winners Chonburi who beat Shenzhen 6-3 with Jirawat twice on target for the Thai club.

"We started well, but then we started making some mistakes that you simply can't make it in a final," said Chonburi coach Jose Maria Pazos.

"However, overall I am very happy with the team and proud of their performance throughout the whole week. Two years ago, we had never even got out of the group stage, but now we've made it to two finals in a row.

"We're one of the top teams in Asia and we'll rise again and be back next year."

Tabriz had earlier edged out Shenzhen on penalties in the third place play-off following a 5-5 draw after extra-time.

Goalkeeper Alireza Samimi saved from Kuang Xuanpu and Zeng Liang before Mohammad Koohestani held his nerve to net the winning spot kick in sudden-death after Shenzhen custodian Wei Zheng had saved Vahid Shafiei's opening penalty in the shootout.

"I believe that we found a new power in futsal in Asia in the form of China and Shenzhen," said Tabriz coach Hossein



Shams.

“Of course, I was worried in the penalty shootout because there’s not a lot a head coach can do, but Alireza Samimi is one of the best goalkeepers in Asia – maybe the best overall – and with those saves he showed Asia his quality.”

Japan international Kaoru Morioka enjoyed a triple celebration as he was named the MVP of the tournament while also claiming the top goal scorer honour after netting five goals in five games for Nagoya.

Team-mates Ximbinha and Kitahara also netted five times, as did Farid Namazi of Tabriz, Shenzhen’s Rubinho and Chonburi’s

Jirawat, but Morioka claimed the clean sweep of the individual honours after contributing more assists.

“This is my first time to win the MVP title at a tournament and it makes me very proud and will motivate me to improve and keep working harder to raise my levels and efforts even further,” said 35-year-old Japan international Morioka.

“Even though I was part of the Japan team that won the AFC Futsal Championship earlier this year, I had a lot of injuries and problems at that tournament. At this competition, though, I had the chance to be involved a lot in every game and show my ability.”



Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Nagoya Oceans (JPN)	3	2	1	0	15	7	8	7
Shenzhen Nanling Tielang (CHN)	3	2	1	0	15	8	7	7
Lokomotiv Tashkent (UZB)	3	1	0	2	10	12	-2	3
Vic Vipers (AUS)	3	0	0	3	3	16	-13	0

25/08/14

Nagoya Oceans 3 (Hidekazu Shirakata 8, Tomoaki Watanabe 21, Konstantin Sviridov 30 OG) Lokomotiv Tashkent 1 (Farkhod Abdumavlyanov 38)

Shenzhen Nanling Tielang 3 (Deng Tao 8, Cong Lin 23, Zeng Liang 27) Vic Vipers 0

26/08/14

Vic Vipers 0 Nagoya Oceans 6 (Tomoki Yoshikawa 3, Ximbinha 9, 9, 15, Kaoru Morioka 12, Kiyoto Yagi 27)

Lokomotiv Tashkent 2 (Oleg Khalmukhamedov 20, Artur Yusunov 30) Shenzhen Nanling Tielang 6 (Cong Lin 6, Liang Shiming 8, 13, Rubinho 10, 38, Zeng Liang 14)

27/08/14

Shenzhen Nanling Tielang 6 (Danilo 10, 12, 17, He Yihui 19, Deng Tao 25, Kaoru Morioka 33 OG) Nagoya Oceans 6 (Ximbinha 9, 19, Wataru Kitahara 12, Tomoaki Watanabe 24, Hidekazu Shirakata 26, Kaoru Morioka 29)

Lokomotiv Tashkent 7 (Farkhod Abdumavlyanov 3, 34, Fernando 8 OG, Vitaliy Borisov 23, 35, Furkat Azizov 27, Oleg Khalmukhamedov 37) Vic Vipers 3 (Miguel Barrigos 1, 19, 39)

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Chonburi Bluewave (THA)	3	2	1	0	11	5	6	7
Dabiri Tabriz (IRN)	3	2	0	1	13	6	7	6
Al Qadsia (KUW)	3	1	1	1	16	18	-2	4
Bank of Beirut SC (LIB)	3	0	0	3	8	19	-11	0

25/08/14

Dabiri Tabriz 5 (Javad Asghari 16, Vahid Shafiei 24, Farid Namazi 35, Farhad Fakhim 38, Nasrollah Momen 39) Bank of Beirut SC 1 (Ali Theich 36)

Chonburi Bluewave 4 (Rudimar Venancio 22, Hamad Al Awadhi 24 OG, Jirawat Sornwichian 28, Meshari Al Nakkas 40 OG) Al Qadsia 4 (Rafinha 12, Abdulrahman Al Wadi 30, Salem Al Mekaini 36, Meshari Al Nakkas 39)

26/08/14

Al Qadsia 2 (Abdulrahman Al Tawail 5, Hamad Al Awadhi 30) Dabiri Tabriz 7 (Morteza Ezzati 11, Nasrollah Momen 20, Babak Akbari 26, Farid Namazi 28, Behroz Jafari 32, Javad Asghari 33, Vahid Shafiei 35)

Bank of Beirut SC 0 Chonburi Bluewave 4 (Suphawut Thueanklang 9, 35, Apiwat Chaemcharoen 28, Nattavut Madyalan 35)

27/08/14

Chonburi Bluewave 3 (Suphawut Thueanklang 17, Jirawat Sornwichian 31, Farid Namazi 40 OG) Dabiri Tabriz 1 (Farid Namazi 36)

Bank of Beirut SC 7 (Mohammad Iskandarani 2, Ahmad Kheireldine 4, 33, Rudolpho Da Costa 29, 40, Yasser Salman 38, Ali El Homs 40) Al Qadsia 10 (Hamad Al Awadhi 5, 32, 39, Rafinha 9, 24, Abdulrahman Al Tawail 11, Salem Al Mekaini 26, Samer Al Deen 36, 38, 39)

Semi-Finals

29/08/14

Nagoya Oceans 6 (Tomoaki Watanabe 3, Tomoki Yoshikawa 6, Wataru Kitahara 28, 32, Ryuma Shinoda 39, Kaoru Morioka 39)

Dabiri Tabriz 2 (Farhad Fakhim 7, Mohammad Koohestani 8)

Chonburi Bluewave 6 (Rudimar Venancio 6, Jirawat Sornwichian 7, 24, Keattiyot Chalaemkhet 16, Tanakorn Santanaprasit 16, Suphawut Thueanklang 23) Shenzhen Nanling Tielang 3

Third Place Play-Off

30/08/14

Dabiri Tabriz 5 (Babak Akbari 2, Farid Namazi 8, 25, Mohammad Ghasemi 14, Farhad Fakhim 27) Shenzhen Nanling Tielang 5 (Rubinho 5, 13, 25, Takahashi Hatakeyama 6, Zeng Liang 36)

Dabiri Tabriz win 7-6 on penalties

Final

30/08/14

Nagoya Oceans 5 (Wataru Kitahara 13, 49, Hidekazu Shirakata 22, Kaoru Morioka 27, 34) Chonburi Bluewave 4 (Jirawat Sornwichian 9, Rudimar Venancio 13, Sarawut Jaipetch 32, 40)

AET



Unbeaten Iraq Land U-14 Crown

A brace from striker Mohanad Ali Kadhim secured Iraq victory at the inaugural AFC U-14 Championship as a 3-0 win over DPR Korea in August's final at Hajibabaei Stadium in Iran completed an unbeaten campaign.

Iraq captain Mohammed Ridha, who was named the tournament's MVP, was also on target against DPR Korea with all three goals coming in the second half in a dominant performance by Iraq in the final.

Their success in Hamedan is Iraq's second continental age-group title of the year following their victorious campaign at the AFC U-22 Championship in January in Oman.

Iraq had topped Group B with an undefeated record ahead of Korea Republic, Thailand and Tajikistan.

DPR Korea also posted an unbeaten record after topping Group A in front of hosts Iran, Timor Leste and Saudi Arabia.

DPR Korea had started their campaign with a confident 2-0 win over Saudi Arabia thanks to goals from captain Kim Pom-hyok and forward Paek Chung-gong.

Kim then netted his second of the tournament to secure a 1-0 win over hosts Iran before DPR Korea secured top spot in Group A following a 2-2 draw with Timor Leste.

Iraq, meanwhile, kicked-off proceedings at the AFC U-14 Championship with with a 1-0 win over Korea Republic thanks to a second half strike from Kadhim.

A 1-1 draw with Tajikistan followed before a 5-0 drubbing of Thailand thanks to two goals from Kadhim sealed Iraq's unbeaten start to the campaign.

Mohammed Ridha was also at the double as Iraq secured a 3-2 comeback win over Iran in the semi-finals.

Goalkeeper Kim Kum-song, meanwhile, saved two penalties as DPR Korea reached the final by beating traditional rivals Korea Republic 3-1 in a penalty shootout following goalless draw after extra-time.

Kadhim, who was the tournament's leading goalscorer with four goals before the final, took his total tally to six and walked away with the golden boot award, one ahead of Ridha and four ahead of five others, that included Kim, Ko Jun-hee and Lee In-gyu of Korea Republic, and Iran's Mogsen Godarzi.

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
DPR Korea	3	2	1	0	5	2	3	7
Iran	3	2	0	1	5	2	3	6
Timor Leste	3	1	1	1	5	7	-2	4
Saudi Arabia	3	0	0	3	1	5	-4	0

04/08/14

Iran 4 Timor Leste 1
Saudi Arabia 0 DPR Korea 2

06/08/14

Timor Leste 2 Saudi Arabia 1
DPR Korea 1 Iran 0

08/08/14

Iran 1 Saudi Arabia 0
DPR Korea 2 Timor Leste 2

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Iraq	3	2	1	0	7	1	6	7
Korea Republic	3	2	0	1	10	1	9	6
Thailand	3	1	0	2	2	14	-2	3
Tajikistan	3	0	1	2	2	5	-3	1

05/08/14

Korea Republic 0 Iraq 1
Tajikistan 1 Thailand 2

07/08/14

Iraq 1 Tajikistan 1
Thailand 0 Korea Republic 8

09/08/14

Korea Republic 2 Tajikistan 0
Thailand 0 Iraq 5

Semi-Finals

11/08/14

DPR Korea 0 Korea Republic 0 AET
DPR Korea win 3-1 on penalties
Iraq 3 Iran 2

Final

13/08/14

DPR Korea 0 Iraq 3



Thailand Claim Regional Crown

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Philippines	3	3	0	0	12	0	12	9
Vietnam	3	2	0	1	11	1	10	6
Cambodia	3	1	0	2	2	14	-12	3
Singapore	3	0	0	3	1	11	-10	0

10/06/14

Singapore 0 Philippines 6

Vietnam 8 Cambodia 0

11/06/14

Cambodia 2 Singapore 1

Philippines 1 Vietnam 0

12/06/14

Philippines 5 Cambodia 0

Vietnam 3 Singapore 0

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Thailand	2	2	0	0	6	0	6	6
Myanmar	2	1	0	1	1	5	-4	3
Malaysia	2	0	0	2	0	2	-2	0

10/06/14

Malaysia 0 Thailand 1

11/06/14

Myanmar 1 Malaysia 0

12/06/14

Thailand 5 Myanmar 0

Semi-Finals

14/06/14

Philippines 2 Myanmar 1

Thailand 2 Vietnam 0

Third Place Play-Off

15/06/14

Myanmar 1 Vietnam 3

Final

15/06/14

Philippines 1 Thailand 2

Thailand won the second edition of the AFC U-14 Regional Championship (ASEAN) after completing an unbeaten campaign with a 2-1 win over the Philippines in June's final at Thong Nhat Stadium in Vietnam. Ratchaphan Kitirat and Dassama

Laochaem scored for Thailand, who finished runners-up last year, in the first half.

And despite Arantxa Trebol pulling a goal back for the Philippines in the second half, Thailand held on to claim the title having missed out last year to Vietnam when the tournament was played on a round-robin basis.

Nepal, DPR Korea and Jordan had earlier claimed their respective regional titles in the South and Central, East and West regions. Thailand had topped Group B with a 100% record ahead of Myanmar and Malaysia, while the Philippines beat defending champions Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore to top Group A.

The Philippines had made a strong start to their Group A campaign with a 6-0 win over Singapore thanks to two goals from Itsuko Bacatan before edging out Vietnam by a single goal from Lindsay Whaley.

And the Philippines completed a perfect group stage record without conceding a goal following a 5-0 win over Cambodia.

Thailand, meanwhile, opened their campaign with a 1-0 win over Malaysia courtesy of a second half strike from Penpitcha Chaisida before ensuring top spot in Group B with a convincing 5-0 win over Myanmar thanks to two goals from Tipkritta Onsamai.

Joyce Semacio then scored the second half winner as the Philippines record a 2-1 comeback win over Myanmar in the semi-finals, while Thailand secured their place in the final as goals from Dassama and Tipkritta sealed a 2-0 win over Vietnam.

Defending champions Vietnam, though, were able to recover to beat Myanmar 3-1 in the third place play-off.

Philippines midfielder Semacio was named the tournament MVP, while Vietnam's Tran Thi Hai Linh took away the top scorer accolade.

Hai Linh scored five goals as Vietnam beat Cambodia 8-0 in the group stage, while the midfielder also opened the scoring in the third place play-off against Myanmar.

The Philippines, who finished fourth in 2013, claimed the Fair Play Award.

Vanishing Spray Makes AFC Debut

Vanishing spray was used for the first time at an AFC event during the AFC U-16 Championship in Thailand in September.

Referees use the spray to indicate the position of a free-kick by marking a semi-circle goal side of the ball before pacing out the 10 yards and drawing a line where the defensive wall should stand for set-pieces near the penalty area.

And following its successful use at the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Australian referee Peter Green was the first official to use the device during the AFC U-16 Championship quarter-final between Japan and Korea Republic at Rajamangala Stadium after it was introduced from the knockout stage onwards at the tournament in Thailand.

The spray evaporates about a minute after being administered from a canister by the referee and helps prevent players from both sides from stealing ground at free-kicks.

Japanese referee Yuichi Nishimura was the first referee to use the spray in a FIFA World Cup after making out a Brazil free-kick in the opening match against Croatia.



Malaysian Protect the Goal Campaign Kicks Off

The AFC, in collaboration with the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and Asian Development Bank, has embarked on a nationwide Protect the Goal campaign in Malaysia to create awareness of the disease.

The Protect the Goal campaign was launched at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa to educate society on HIV prevention programmes.

Globally, an estimated 5.4 million adolescents and young people are living with HIV, and an estimated 1.8 million people are eligible for HIV treatment.

The 'Three Zeroes' vision driven by United Nations

Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the Protect the Goal campaign has received tremendous support from AFC affiliates with the objective of achieving zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS related deaths.

The Protect the Goal campaign is designed to ride on the popularity and power of football to unite the world towards the goal of an AIDS-free generation.

As such, the Protect the Goal campaign in Malaysia, which is targeted at boys and girls aged 10-14, kicked off with a Football Coaching Clinic.



Medical Conference To Feature Renowned Surgeon



Renowned American orthopedic surgeon Dr. Bert Mandelbaum will attend the 5th AFC Medical Conference in New Delhi at the start of April 2015.

Dr. Mandelbaum has been scheduled to perform a live surgery on the anterior cruciate ligament, which is one of the top three injuries among footballers, during the high-level conference.

Conference participants will have an opportunity to enter discussions with Dr. Mandelbaum on the analysis, procedures and evaluation of elite footballers who want to play again after recovering from major knee surgery.

Dr. Mandelbaum, who is a member of the FIFA Medical Committee and FIFA Medical Assessment and Research Centre as well as being Medical Director for

the FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence, is among the world's foremost experts in the diagnosis and treatment of orthopedic conditions, especially those related to the knee.

He is also chairs the Medical Committee of CONCACAF, is Chief Medical Officer to the US national football team and has worked at several FIFA World Cups and Olympic Games.

Dr. Mandelbaum is actively involved in various sports, the Olympic movement and has been appointed as Chief Medical Officer for the 2015 World Special Olympic Games.

The 5th AFC Medical Conference will be attended by 800-1,000 delegates from around the world.

India will be the fourth country to host the prestigious conference after Japan (1995), Oman (2005) and Malaysia (2011 and 2000).



Women's Football On Singapore's Agenda

Singapore have outlined a strategic plan for 2010-2015 during a visit by an AFC delegation, with women's football identified as one of the 16 key areas of development.

Football Association of Singapore General Secretary Winston Lee welcomed AFC delegates Junko Imai - AFC Women's Football Committee member, Julie Teo - Head of AFC Women's Development, and Dr. Michele Cox - UEFA Consultant, to Jalan Besar Stadium in August as part of the AFC Women's Assistance Programme.

During the visit, the delegation learned of the strategic steps the Football Association of Singapore has taken to continue to develop and improve the women's game such as the setting up of a Junior Centre of Excellence for U-11 girls.

The delegation also observed a U-13 girls football match played at the Hong Kah Secondary School which has included football under the Singapore Ministry of Education's School-Based Excellence and Niche Programme.

The schools in this programme receive additional funding to further raise the quality and the reach of their school-based programmes in the different areas.

The Direct Schools' Admission Scheme, the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) football programmes and the People's Association (PA) grassroots programmes are

other collaborations with stakeholders the delegation found could strengthen the development of women's football in Singapore.

A weekly coaching and mentoring session on the National Football Syllabus is conducted by Football Association of Singapore Technical Director, Slobodan Pavkovic, for age-group team coaches, national football academy coaches and centres of excellence coaches which includes three

female coaches as part of the overall on-going coaching development programme.

With girls football being played enthusiastically at primary, secondary, college and tertiary levels, a local league and a knockout competition also features on the women's football calendar in Singapore.

Singapore first participated in the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship this year in the ASEAN region, while they will also participate in the AFC U-19 Women's Championships 2015 qualifiers in November.

In helping the Football Association of Singapore to achieve its strategic objectives, the AFC Women's Assistance Programme will provide technical support such as grassroots guidelines, grassroots and coaching courses for teachers, parents, former and current players and assistance in designing content for workshops and dialogue with schools and clubs in order to increase participation and improve the quality of domestic competitions.



Coach Asia Course Concludes

Participants of the pioneering AFC Coach Asia Batch 2014 programme completed their second module in China at the end of August.

The 26 participants are taking part in the new coaching course which is expected to culminate in the awarding of the AFC Professional Football Coaching Diploma or Pro Diploma which is the highest coaching qualification in the continent.

During the programme, participants observed training sessions ahead of the AFC Champions League quarter-final second leg between China's Guangzhou Evergrande and Australia's Western Sydney Wanderers before analysing the game.

The Coach Asia programme was launched in April with the first of five modules, which will be completed over two years, covering fitness topics.

The course is aimed at developing top-level coaches who can contribute to their Member Associations and identify potential coaching instructors.



Instructors Key To Develop Referees

A total of 38 participants from 12 Member Associations in the West Asian region attended a FIFA Futuro III course in Dubai in September.

The Referee Technical Instructors Course was attended by 25

participants, while the Referee Fitness Instructors Course was attended by 13 participants.

"I'd like to thank FIFA and AFC on behalf of the President of the UAE FA for having the course in our nation," said UAE Football Association Vice President Obaid Salem Al Shamsi.

"I'd also like to highlight and appreciate the huge role played by referees and instructors to develop and to improve the standard of football in Asia and I believe the course will help further enhance the level of

refereeing in the region."

FIFA Senior Manager for Refereeing Development Fernando Tresaco-Gracia was part of the team who delivered the Referee Technical Instructor Course.



"You are in the very good hands of top instructors. Remember the objectives and improve the level of referee instructors who will improve the level of referees," said FIFA Senior Manager for Refereeing Development Tresaco-Gracia.

"You will get new tools to improve your teaching technique. This is a great

opportunity to exchange and share knowledge among the Member Associations in your region. Make use of the opportunity to discuss and improve refereeing in your country."

FIFA/AFC Regional Seminars Take Place

Presidents, General Secretaries and Technical Directors from football associations in South and Central Asian as well as the ASEAN region attended FIFA/AFC Regional Member Associations and Development Seminars in Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Representatives from 11 South and Central Asian football associations attended the seminar in Colombo, while 12 Member Associations were represented in Kuala Lumpur.

"Time has not managed to diminish my passion and love for this beautiful game. However, even with my many years of service, I am a firm believer that you can never acquire too much knowledge. We can all continue to learn and adopt good practices in our respective associations as there is plenty of information that we can use in both the administration and technical aspects of football," said AFC Vice-President and President of the Football Association of Malaysia HRH Prince Abdullah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah.



"We always have room to improve, which is why I am fully committed and supportive of FIFA's methodologies of good governance. There's still a lot left for us as a region to learn and implement and if I can facilitate that in any way, I am more than happy to help."

Sri Lanka also successfully hosted AFC President's Cup in September, while an AFC 'A' Coaching Certificate Course will be held in Sri Lanka in October.

"It is a wake-up call for all football administrators in South and Central Asian countries where there is huge human capital with enormous potential for the development of the game to meet international challenges in technical development, sponsorships, and a myriad of other areas," said AFC General

Secretary Dato' Alex Soosay. "A major plus is the fact that in South Asia over a billion people are crazy about cricket, and yet they have a huge passion for football. This affords us an opportunity to develop the global game further in the South and Central region."

AFC & FFA Eye Futsal Improvement

A three-day assessment visit by the AFC Futsal & Beach Soccer Development Team to Australia took place in August.

Having won all four editions of the OFC Futsal Championship prior to joining the AFC, Australia reached the semi-finals of the 2012 AFC Futsal Championship to qualify for the 2012 FIFA Futsal World Cup in Thailand.

"Most importantly is the direction of FFA towards the development of futsal in this country and we are willing to work closely with AFC Futsal & Beach Soccer Development Team," said AFC Vice President and Football Federation Australia (FFA) Board Member Moya Dodd.

"The standard of football had increased ever since FFA had joined AFC in 2006. It's time for futsal in Australia to reach to a higher standard in Asia.

"Futsal is becoming more popular in Australia so this will help improve the game. I believe there's plenty of room for improvement in the development of Futsal."



RAJAMANGALA NATIONAL STADIUM

Bangkok, Thailand

The Rajamangala National Stadium was opened in 1998 ahead of Thailand's hosting of the 13th Asian Games. Construction of the venue which is located within the Huamark Sports Complex began in 1988 to celebrate the King of Thailand's 60th birthday in 1987 and the longest reign of a Thai monarch in 1988.

The capacity of the stadium was reduced to 49,722 due to improvements ahead of the 2007 AFC Asian Cup which included adding plastic seating to the original concrete steps. The Huamark Sports Complex also contains a 6,500 indoor stadium and a swimming pool as well as numerous other sport facilities. A large number of Thailand's sport authorities and federations also have offices at Rajamangala National Stadium or within

the Huamark Sports Complex, while Thailand's National Sports Museum is located within the stadium. Rajamangala National Stadium was used as Thailand's main venue during the 2007 AFC Asian Cup. The venue has also hosted numerous other sporting events including the 2007 Premier League Asia Trophy, 2012 Race of Champions, as well as athletics events and music concerts.




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Hello Tomorrow

A full-page photograph of Ashkan Dejagah, a professional footballer, in action. He is wearing a red Iran national football team kit, including a jersey with the number 21 and the name 'DEJAGAH' on the back, red shorts, and red socks. He is captured in a dynamic pose, running towards the right side of the frame with his mouth open as if shouting or celebrating. The background is a blurred green football pitch and a red advertising banner with white text. The lighting suggests an evening match under stadium lights.

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Ashkan Dejagah
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